LOVE OR MARRIAGE?

VOLUME III.

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LOVE OR MARRIAGE?

A Novel.

BY

WILLIAM BLACK.

IN THREE VOLS.

VOL. III.

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CONTENTS OF VOLUME III.

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

MR. HELSTONE'S VIEWS 9

CHAPTER II.

FIRST TIDINGS 36

CHAPTER III.

SEVERED 52

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRUGGLE DECIDED 65

PAGE

CHAPTER V.

THE GHOST DISSECTED 89

CHAPTER VI.

THE DISCLOSURE 111

CHAPTER VII.

THE RELIEF OF ACTION 130

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRESTED 144

CHAPTER IX.

A FRIENDLY COMPANY 166

CHAPTER X.

AT LAST 200

CHAPTER XI.

EXPLANATIONS 228

PAGE

CHAPTER XII.

CALAIS 249

CHAPTER XIII.

DOWN BY THE SEA 267

LOVE OR MARRIAGE?

CHAPTER I.

MR. HELSTONE'S VIEWS.

A WEEK or two after Charlie's departure from England, Mr. Helstone was invited to go and have a day's trout-fishing by Mr. Willoughby Oakes, of Herne Hall, Bucks.

Helstone went down on the previous evening, was driven over from the nearest station in Mr. Oakes' trim dog-cart, and having dined, and talked, and smoked, and slept, awoke next morning to find himself in one of the leafiest valleys in Buckinghamshire, with a strong sunlight

beating on the meadows outside, with bees buzzing and trees quivering around him, and with all the bright, warm, happy life of spring thrilling in the soft air, and in the green woods, and in the sheltered hollows surrounding the house.

Herne Hall rather belied its name. It was not a hall. It looked more like a collection of antiquated farm buildings, thrown together in a hap-hazard way, built of red brick, and surrounded by a small garden, an immense orchard, a bit of lawn, with a couple of fountains, a croquet-ground, and some standard roses. The original owners of Herne Hall must have had a madness for irregularity and comfort; and their present descendant, though he had fallen into a very different sort of life from theirs, still loved to keep the old place in its old state. He had laid the lawn, it is true; and formed the

croquet-ground; but he had not cut down a single cedar or lilac-bush, however ridiculously placed it might be.

For this Mr. Willoughby Oakes, forsaking the homely life of his fathers, had gone to London, and there become a wealthy lawyer, a speculator in railways, —a man of great renown in commercial circles. He was intensely respectable— you could see it in his small, angular figure, his thin face with its dry grey whiskers, his smooth black wig, which was rather out of keeping with those whiskers, and in his highly polished suavity and gravity of demeanour. The country people did not think nearly so much of the studied condescension, the systematic generosity, and periodical inquiries of Mr. Willoughby Oakes, as they thought of a nod from Mr. Oakes' swearing, fighting, drinking, bullying father, who had a

splendid English fashion of taking the law into his own hands when anybody offended him, and who could turn out a tenant with a boisterous good-humour which won everybody's heart. The rustic mind admires nothing so much as a fine, strong animalism — an animalism full of instinct, and passion, and pugnacity, able to make its way and crush down whatever frail scruples and frailer organizations stand in its path.

Mr. Willoughby Oakes' relations with Christian Helstone were somewhat peculiar. He was, in the first place, the proprietor of a weekly commercial paper which Helstone edited for him, but what he most valued Helstone for was the information to be got from him concerning those religious and philosophical modern heresies in which Mr. Oakes took a deep interest. He desired to be

acquainted with those things, as a part of his culture: not that he himself had any leaning towards them, for he was strictly orthodox. He had a keen relish in hearing all the new "views;" and was delighted to have long chats with Mr. Helstone upon such dangerous subjects, himself strongly intrenched behind his orthodox earthworks. He took a half-frightened pleasure in listening to this editor of his—to his startling paradoxes, his heresies, his bold speculations. It was like supping with the devil, a very large table being placed between the *bons compagnons*. He constantly invited Helstone down to his country house on some pretext or other; his real object being to spend a long afternoon in sitting in his arm-chair and listening to Mr. Helstone—drinking those gin-slings of modern thought until he was in danger of be-

coming intoxicated, and then falling back upon his own inward convictions for copious draughts of soda-water.

They were going to fish a bit of the river further up the valley which had not been disturbed that year. Helstone wore his ordinary clothes, with the addition of a pair of fishing-boots; but Mr. Oakes was in full angling costume. And no sooner was he in that costume than he became another creature. His painful respectability dropped from him like the grandmother's cloak which conceals the queen of the fairies, and Mr. Oakes stepped forth an enthusiast — a man careless of wetting, and hunger, and scratches — a man who would at a pinch share a pint of beer with his under-keeper, the young person who generally accompanied him, both drinking out of the same measure—a man full

of present impulse, with no after-thought, no *cui bono* considerations whatever.

They were going along the banks of the small river, walking through strong, sweet-smelling clover, when he suddenly grasped Helstone's arm—

"There! look there!"

He pointed to the stream, and, from the expression of his face, Helstone expected to see the dead body of a man or woman lying among the reeds, or in some dark pool beneath the clumps of alders.

"Don't you see him?" he continued. "There he goes — he rises again — now he's down again—and, by Jove! there was a rise!"

Helstone just caught sight of a Mayfly as it was sucked into the jaws of a fine trout—a two-pounder; and then, as they hurried along the bank, eager to get to the spot where they were to commence

operations, they saw several May-flies which the sudden warmth of the weather had quickened into life.

"The Mayfly out! What a stroke of luck!" cried Mr. Oakes, as he tore along through the thick grass by the river-side.

A few moments sufficed to put the artificial flies on, and then the thin, snaky, blue-white lines began to whip the water. Helstone had the first rise, but struck too soon, and the fish escaped. He had scarce time to curse his ill-luck when his companion hooked a fine fish, and, after a little cautious play, there being some dangerous masses of weed in the centre of the shallow stream, landed him, and laid him on the bank, his silver belly, purplish back, and scarlet spots glittering among the grass.

This was a fair commencement, and it fortunately proved only a prelude to an

unusual run of luck. It would be foreign to my purpose, however, to stay to recount the adventures of the day — the rapidly-filling bag, the lunch under the alders, with champagne cooled among the reeds, the stumbling into the water and up to the armpits of Mr. Oakes, the brilliant exploit of Mr. Helstone in landing an enormous chub. Suffice it to say that, after a long day's labour which seemed surprisingly short, the man carried home fifty-eight pounds of trout and a chub; and that both gentlemen, having dressed, sat down to dinner with a splendid appetite for rich food and daring talk. Mr. Oakes, at least, fancied he was able to encounter anything in either direction.

After dinner, Helstone's host produced some claret fit to have drawn secrets from a miser's bosom. Helstone knew the

wine, and lit his cigar with pleased anticipation.

"Why don't you marry, Helstone?" said his companion, settling himself in his easy-chair.

Helstone looked up—apparently a little startled by the suddenness of the question.

"Why don't you marry, Mr. Oakes?" he said, in reply. "You have had longer time to think about it than I."

"So I should have married," said Mr. Willoughby Oakes, "but for a—for a circumstance."

He pretended to be busy lighting his meerschaum. The temptation to talk, however, with such a companion, was too great.

"The fact is," he said, a minute afterwards, "I have never seen but one girl whom I should actually have been desirous to marry, and she—well, her brother was

sentenced to be hanged, and was transported instead."

"And she bore part of the penalty, too, of course," said Helstone.

"The fact is," rejoined Mr. Oakes, with some sort of embarrassment, "one isn't always one's master. We have to conform to other people's prejudices. If I had married that girl, now, society would have——"

He left the rest of the sentence to be inferred.

"We don't see as yet," said Helstone, "that every man who is hanged or transported is a true martyr to society. Society ought to be full of pity for that man, and for his relations. Society ought to say to him, 'I am very sorry for you, because I cannot help killing you, and it is I who am in fault. You obeyed your strongest motive—you could not do otherwise; it

is my fault that I was too careless to educate you and make another motive your strongest motive. I was wrong in fancying that fear of death was a motive so strong as to keep all men from murder; but still I fear it keeps many of us from murder, and so I am going to kill you for the benefit of other people. I do not kill you out of revenge, but in order to mould the motives of others—to limit their volition by the check of fear. I am grieved that I am compelled to put you out of this present existence, but my remorse shall make me try to prevent the occurrence of such a fearful and horrible thing, and I will love, and sympathise with, and honour your friends, if they will only forgive me for what I am about to do.'"

"By Jove, you're right!" exclaimed Mr. Oakes; and then he paused, stammered, and said, "But people know right

from wrong. They ought to choose the right."

"People, when they fall over a precipice, know that if they could catch a particular tree they would be saved. But gravitation has a firm hold of them all the same, and dashes their brains out."

"I—I don't know what you mean," said Mr. Oakes, hastily. "To return. You said — no, I mean — confound your theories! they upset one like a dose of ipecacuanha—I was about to tell you that this girl was really a noble-hearted creature, poor as Lucifer, and as proud. I believe I could have sold up the old house then, and all my belongings, and gone with her to America; but then the preliminaries to the marriage — the consternation of friends — the perplexity and irrevocable character of the whole matter——"

"Precisely," said Helstone. "We have contrived to make what ought to be the most natural and pleasant step in a man's life a fiery ordeal. We have surrounded it with contingent penalties, made it a terror instead of an allurement, and, to crown all, steeped it in religious gloom. Do you wonder so many men have acted like yourself—have seen a young girl they would fain have made their wife, and have shrank from the idea of marriage when it was presented to them in such sombre colours?"

Now Mr. Oakes was prepared for a good deal; but, after all, he felt he had to draw the line somewhere.

"You—you don't mean to say you go against the divine institution of marriage?" he stammered.

"I want the divine institution of marriage; but I don't want the bugbear of

marriage that your orthodox Milton satirised, that your orthodox Dr. Johnson condemned, that——"

"But marriage is only a civil contract," objected Mr. Oakes.

"I thought you said it was a divine institution," retorted Mr. Helstone, who seemed to bring a very unusual personal fervour into the discussion; "but you, as a lawyer, know that there is not a tittle of biblical authority to uphold it. Very well, it is a civil contract; and, as a civil contract, is about as bad as it could be. Our marriage laws endeavour to give a fictitious permanency to what is in its nature unstable and temporary. They make what ought to be a mere experiment irrevocable. They consign you to the chances of a leap in the dark. They act as openly in defiance of human nature as any of the monstrous absurdities of

asceticism which the mediæval ages spawned upon the world."

All this shocked Mr. Oakes exceedingly, as was natural. He had no objection to hear hazardous theories of free-will, because the truth or falsehood of Mr. Helstone's speculations did not affect him. But to hear a man openly abuse the marriage ceremony as unbiblical, monstrous, a mistake, and an iniquity, seemed to cut at the very roots of all his traditional beliefs.

"Good heavens, Helstone, look what you're aiming at!" he cried. "Suppose we abolish our marriage laws, what would become of the morality of the country?"

"My dear sir," said Mr. Helstone, with a smile, "we were talking of ourselves, not of the country. To abolish these laws in England at present would ruin her, because she is not prepared for any-

thing better. All reforms, theocratic, political, and social, are possible only when the popular mind has been led up to them; and in England just now we are enveloped in such fogs of unreason, prejudice, and superstition that what may be proper for particular persons might become a scandal if openly inculcated. You understand? Did I not say a man must obey his most powerful motive? If the fear of hell alone keeps him moral, let him retain his fear of hell until some other and nobler influence reaches him."

"You mean," remarked Mr. Oakes, striking out wildly for some safe landing-place, "that although you, personally, may think yourself justified in ignoring our marriage ceremonies, and taking a wife as the old Jews took a wife, you would not recommend the general adoption of the system?"

"Exactly."

"Then perhaps you may be secretly married according to this primitive formula of mutual consent, eh?"

This was merely a joke on the part of Mr. Oakes, but Mr. Helstone did not seem at all to relish it.

"We were discussing general theories," said he, in reply, and with some asperity. "Doubtless you will look upon such a system as conducive to all the horrors of uncertain descent, widespread pauperism, and unlimited license; but these are all phantoms conjured up from those vague religious traditions out of which few men are able to travel. These things would probably occur *now*, if this license were given to such a brutish public as the English. But in time men will be able to exist upon a personal and conscious morality, not upon an artificial social morality

which is no better than so many prison rules. They will become better men, not by narrowing the boundaries which this conventional morality has drawn, but by throwing away those boundaries and legitimizing the necessities of human nature—by making that a virtue which is now a vice."

"In the meantime——"

"In the meantime am I to be sacrificed to the ignorance of my countrymen? I hope and trust not. I will do what I consider due to myself, so long as I do not impinge upon their social safety."

"Then suppose you were to marry in that biblical fashion you speak of, you would have to keep your marriage secret, so as not to shock the feelings of your neighbours?"

"That would depend on my neighbours.

But why do you insist on *my* being married, merely because I show you my notion of what marriage ought to be?"

Oakes only laughed. Joking about marriage is one of the prevailing forms of country wit, some of which he had unconsciously imbibed. Mr. Helstone, however, seemed a little nettled, and was evidently bent on reprisals, even should these lead him into the grossness of personality.

"Why," he said, "you know how we venerate grey hair."

Oakes coloured slightly: his wig was painfully sleek and black.

"There is no earthly reason why we should respect grey hair, any more than brown hair, or green hair. But until we have arrived at some consciousness of our duties towards the aged and weak, it is

better that these should be hallowed and sheltered by a fictitious but sacred superstition. The man who first broke through the savage's contempt for old age, and endeavoured to make old age venerable, had divine inspiration in him. And so with marriage. Until men have arrived at a knowledge of the social advantages of being faithful to one wife, and of educating one's children, apart from religious dogma and civil penalty, by all means let the dogmas and penalties exist."

"Now you talk practically and sensibly," said Mr. Oakes, forgetting the unkind cut about the hair in his delight on reaching dry land.

"And yet what deterrent, mischievous influences these penalties have on some people," continued Helstone. "I suppose that girl who went to America was fond of you?"

"I believe she would have married me."

Helstone looked at him.

"And you said she was poor, and had the misfortune to be proud. Then she must have loved you, for that is not the sort of woman who is willing to undergo the prostitution of marriage without love. And you were fond of her, doubtless?"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Oakes, with a smile.

There was no smile at his heart; but then men know it to be such a foolish and ridiculous thing to be, or to have been, in love, that in making a confession they anticipate satire by hypocritically sneering at themselves.

"And she is married now, of course?"

"No, she is not."

"Indeed. Then she has been an unwise woman, but she has been an affectionate woman——"

"Well, she was," interposed his companion, hastily. "I will say this, that she had the finest, kindest nature I ever met with. If you had heard her sing

> 'Then we'll up for the green, boys, and up for the green,
> Oh, 'tis down in the dust, and a shame to be seen'—

you know she was an Irish girl;—but what's the use of talking about all that now?"

"Why, none in the world," said Helstone, gloomily. "It makes me savage to think of the whole affair. She, of course, was cursed with that modern morbid sentiment of self-sacrifice, and you were too afraid of society to forbid the sacrifice, and society with its damnable prejudices——"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Helstone,"

said Oakes, warmly, "you use very strange language. You forget that I am a member of society—that I owe duties to society—that I cannot afford to fly in the face of public opinion like a literary man who has nothing to lose."

"*Afford!*" said Helstone, rather bitterly. "It all lies in that, of course. Respectability pays. You could not afford to lose your position, but you could afford to send that girl out to America with a stigma on her name, when you might have taken her by the hand and made her life happier, and your own too. I speak frankly."

"You speak much too frankly."

"Do I?"

"Yes," continued Mr. Oakes, in an unnecessarily high voice, as he rose from his chair; "you speak to me as I am not accustomed to be spoken to—in a manner

that I never heard used before in this house, and——"

"Hope never to hear again," said Helstone, calmly. "Let me finish the sentence for you. Very well. I, on the other hand, have formed a very different opinion of you, within the past half-hour, from that which I held before. And I am not at all desirous of remaining another long evening in the company of——"

"Damn it, sir, you shall have your wish," said Oakes, ringing the bell. "Mary, tell James to have the dog-cart brought round immediately. He has to drive this gentleman to the station."

Mr. Helstone, smoking his cigar, went quietly upstairs, and put his things in his bag. When he came down the dog-cart was at the door.

"Do you wish to drive, sir?" said James.

"Yes."

Helstone got up and took the reins, and the man got up beside him. As they were about to start, Mr. Oakes came forward, and said aloud,

"Hark'ee, Mr. Helstone, you may prepare the —— —— for the new editor, who is coming in a week or two."

"All right."

Helstone drove off, rattled down the courtyard, and then into the quiet, dark road.

"What a cur the thing is!" he said to himself. "And all these years he has imposed on me as a respectable, gentlemanly, ordinary sort of fellow. And he thinks this withdrawal of his wretched five guineas a week is a brilliant stroke of revenge—the imbecile! I wonder how such men can live in the sweet air of the country—I wonder the country does not

spew them out and into the town. However, I promise myself the satisfaction of describing the whole scene to Fanny, whose nimble brain will seize its dramatic possibilities."

CHAPTER II.

FIRST TIDINGS.

WHEN some days had passed without Charlie's re-appearance, Mr. Glencairn began to repent him somewhat of his hastiness. He had imagined Charlie's talk of going abroad to be the ordinary unreasoning threat of a young man in a passion of jealousy; and daily expected to see him return and apologise for that wild accusation he had brought against Fanny.

The days became weeks, and Charlie did not return. Glencairn began to recall the young man's connection with Major Von Kirschenfeld, and in reflecting upon the

possibility of his actually having joined the Prussian army, he could have wished their parting to have been more friendly, for the old man had not many friends.

Then there came a letter.

"*Neisse, Silesia,*
"*May 3rd,* 1866.

"Dear Mr. Glencairn,—Perhaps you and I may not see each other again; and I wish to make some sort of explanation to you. I hope you will not think I accused Fanny upon mere suspicion, or that I did so out of revenge. God knows how willingly I would have continued to regard her as the honest and honourable girl I once knew her to be, had that been longer possible. Enough of that. I do not wish to make you think ill of your daughter, and even on that night I had intended bidding goodbye to you without

saying a word about her. If you can believe that I gave up all my hopes with regard to her without having any reason to do so, it is better you should believe it. I should like you to believe it. But in any case do not let you and me quarrel. I believe I might have stayed in England had you been a little more patient with my rashness and quick speech. But I am not sorry I am here. I like the men whom I have joined—their intelligence and education are extraordinary. Believe me, we shall have a go at the Austrians presently, and then there will be brisker fun going on than in the wretched hole I used to work in—living on dreams! I enjoy my life immensely—have got on famously with my drill and my German, and am on excellent terms with my comrades. After all, there's something worth living for out of London.

"I hope to hear from you that we are still friends.

"Yours sincerely,

"CHARLES BENNETT."

Is not that letter a study?—its continuous *non sequitur*, its stiffness of suppressed emotion at the beginning, its thin glitter of enthusiasm at the end? Few perhaps could have written naturally under the circumstances; but at all events a photograph of Charlie as he penned the careful epistle—in an ill-lighted *café* in that small Silesian fortress—would not have harmonised well with his own picture of the buoyant soldier who was longing to have a "go" at the Austrians.

Mr. Glencairn was more disquieted by this letter than he chose to confess even to himself. He hid it away for two days;

and during that time he devoted many a painful hour to thinking of it. Was it possible, he reflected, that this man Helstone, with his plausible ways, his ingenious sophistry, and what not, had succeeded, at least, in placing Fanny in a suspicious light? Not for a moment did the old man entertain a doubt of his daughter's honour; but he knew his wife's weakness for grandeur, he saw how eagerly she and Fanny were now cultivating the friendship of Mr. Helstone, especially since he had become wealthy; he saw them both not ashamed to wear valuable presents given to them by him; and he wondered if, in any more marked way, his daughter had suffered herself to be placed in an ambiguous position.

How could he tell? His days were spent in Oxford Street; his evenings in books; and he could only strive to ima-

gine what it was which had so provoked and blinded Charlie.

He reproached himself bitterly for having, in a sense, banished him, without listening to a word of explanation; and he was only able to justify his conduct by thinking of the monstrous charge the young man had brought against Fanny.

So he kept the letter in his pocket for two days, trying in the meanwhile to discover something which would partially atone for Charlie's mistake; and then, when he had failed entirely, he showed the letter to his wife.

Mrs. Glencairn read the fatal words with a frightened expression on her face, but in a moment or two her natural passion had asserted itself, her cheeks were hot as fire, and she threw the sheet of note-paper on the table with an angry gesture.

"Well!" she said, with the accent of a tragedy-queen, "what do you mean by showing me such a letter? Do you mean to accuse your own daughter?"

"You are living in a London house, my dear," said Glencairn, gently, "and the walls are not thick. I do not accuse Fanny. But it is enough that you and she together have placed the girl in so equivocal a light as to cause other people to accuse her."

Mrs. Glencairn winced a little; but she said boldly,

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, my dear, that you have not been sufficiently careful to prevent people having any grounds for talking about you. After all, people have a right to judge by appearances; for if a woman is not careful of appearances, it is to be presumed that she——"

"Yes!" interrupted Mrs. Glencairn, with a cold sneer; "a lecture on appearances suits you admirably. You are so careful—you have always been so careful—of the respectability of your family! You have laboured so hard to keep them decently dressed, to give them the social respect they are entitled to. And now you come to me with the ravings of an ill-bred and passionate boy, and you say 'Why have you not dressed yourself better on nothing a year? Why have you been compelled to accept presents from a friend in order to be able to go out of the house? Why have you gone into society with him, and not with me?—to the theatres with him, and not with me?' Is that what you mean by appearances? Very well. If you were able to support your family in the way they have a right to expect to be supported, there would be no need for our

accepting what you are pleased to call equivocal favours from any one."

James Glencairn was a different man now from what he had been that day twelve months. *Then* he would have silenced her with a stern rebuke; now he had nothing to oppose to this tirade but a dull, hopeless look of resignation. He was a broken-spirited man; and she knew it; and knew her advantage, and used it.

She went to the door, and cried out,

"Fanny!"

In a minute or two Fanny entered the room. She had altered much in appearance during the past month or two. She had assumed a sort of matronly look; she had grown self-reliant, grave, matter-of-fact, and more than ever resembled her mother in the expression of her face.

"Me voilà, maman; " she said, with a charming little gesture; and then, as she saw the letter in her mother's hand, "qu'est-ce que c'est encore que cela?"

She had been taking current lessons in French from Mr. Helstone, and she had a pretty acquaintance with the ordinary phrases of that language.

"Read this letter," said her mother, grandly.

She took the letter in one hand, and clasped the other on her bosom. Her father having turned towards the window, did not see her little comedy.

"Entendez-vous comme il bat, bat, ce pauvre cœur?" she said, as she held the page before eyes. "Neisse? Where is Neisse? And who writes from this Neisse?"

The swift, progressive change that now came over her expression and manner

was at once singular and painful. Her mother's cold eyes looked on, and saw it all. First, that mock-heroic attitude fell away, the coquetry of her face died down, and there was an instant in which mere animal fear seemed to produce a sort of paralysis. Her face was blank, her attitude characterless. Then there was a glance at the signature, a trembling of her under-lip, and with a faint, low cry of "Neisse!" she burst into tears and turned away her head.

"Fanny!" said her father, coming over to her, and putting his hand on her shoulder, "what is the matter? You must not heed what is in the letter—though you should never have seen it."

She looked up into his face through her tears.

"He is in Neisse?" she asked.

"Undoubtedly. There is the envelope with the post-mark upon it."

"And he will go to the war, if there should be a war—and all about me. No, papa; you will write to him, will you not? Tell him to come home; tell him I will do anything in the world—anything in the world to please him—and make up to him for what I have done;—tell him that; and if it *is* too late to——"

"Recollect yourself, Fanny!" said her mother, with severe emphasis.

Fanny paused, and did not complete the sentence.

"It does not seem to me to be very appropriate," continued her mother, "for you to show so much interest in one who has so grossly slandered you. You have *other* friends with whom your reputation is as sacred as their own.

"But still, mamma, if he goes into a war——" she said, tremulously.

"There are many better men than he who have done the same, and nobody pitied them. I declare I cannot understand your want of spirit," she continued, seeing that Fanny stood irresolute, with beseeching eyes and face, "in submitting so tamely to such an insult. It is unbearable that a man should be allowed to utter such lies simply because a girl refuses to sacrifice her whole life in marrying him. If he had the spirit of a man himself, he would not dare to ask any woman to undergo the privations that his poverty must entail upon his wife; and to say that because you, Fanny, have had the good sense to refuse him—to say that he must turn and outrage your character—why it is monstrous and insufferable!"

But Fanny's regard for her reputation

was wholly lost in her solicitude about Charlie's safety.—Have I not said before in this book that her tenderness of heart was without limit?

"I never refused him," she said; "it is all a mistake. Papa, will you write and tell him to come back?"

Her father patted her kindly on the head.

"You are too ready to forgive, Fanny," he said. "Before going away, Charlie said that of you which I cannot repeat to you. It was a mistake, as you say; but while he still believes this, would it be fitting for you to make any advances to him?"

"I do not mean to do so. I mean you to ask him," she said.

"But what am I to say? He has gone into the Prussian army because he believed you were unworthy to become his wife. Would you have me endeavour to

persuade him out of his blunder, at such a distance, and invite him to come home and marry you?"

"I don't care what you do," said the girl, piteously, "so you bring him out of the danger. If there is a war, and he is killed, I shall have to think always that I was the cause of it?"

"But you have not been the cause—his own folly has been the cause of his leaving," said Mrs. Glencairn, "and it is right he should reap the fruit of it. What would this intercession of your father's mean? Are you prepared to marry him if he returns?"

The girl glanced towards her mother; and their eyes met. Glencairn was unaware of this subtle telegraphy; but it settled more than a month's argument could have done.

"If he has said what you say he has

said, I suppose he must reap the consequences," Fanny remarked, with a grave simplicity—for no sooner had her intelligence recognised the danger she would run by Charlie's recall than the promptings of her old affection were speedily silenced.

That was all she said. Charlie was mentioned no more in the house. Why should the bugbear of his fate disturb the pleasures upon which mother and daughter, armed by some secret agency, were now bent? Charlie was in Neisse; but the central private boxes at the Lyceum and at the Haymarket were as commodious as ever.

CHAPTER III.

SEVERED.

AT last the collapse which Mr. Glencairn had long anticipated and feared came. He was practically a bankrupt.

Shuddering at the future which lay before him, he would accept, nevertheless, no compromise for the present. His creditors, sure of his probity, were willing that he should go through the court, pay an immediate composition, and continue his business. But he would not accept the offer. He maintained his first intention, and ultimately accomplished it, without legal interference, of selling off

his business, and everything he possessed in connection with it. He managed by this means to pay his creditors about eighteen and sixpence in the pound; and was thrown upon his own resources in order to make up an odd eighteenpence. The whole of this transaction had occupied him about four days, during which time he had slept every night at his place in Oxford Street.

Then he prepared to go home. These four days had made some alteration in the man, or they had brought to the surface a change that had been long secretly preying upon him.

When he arrived opposite his own house, he paused, and looked up at the windows. A ruddy sunset was streaming across the sky, and his cheek caught a glow of the flame which concealed its haggard paleness; but any one acquainted

with that sad face could have remarked its singularly careworn appearance, and the dazed look of the eyes. The moment of irresolution passed, he went up the steps and knocked at the door. His heart beat violently; and he seemed to breathe with difficulty.

When he entered the parlour, he found everything in confusion. Mrs. Glencairn and Fanny were preparing to go out to a party, and they had used the parlour as a place of common consultation about their dresses. The table, chairs, and sofa were, in consequence, strewed and littered with cast-off or rejected pieces of costume; and the general aspect of the place told the old man that something particularly grand was about to come off that evening.

Fanny was the first to enter the room; and as she came forward to receive the usual paternal kiss, Glencairn seemed to

be quite bewildered by the splendour and grace of the queenly little woman who stood before him. There was a brilliancy in her eyes, a heightened life in her complexion, a new electricity in the tossing of her curls, that he had never seen before.

"Papa, you are ill!" she cried.

"No, my dear, no," he said, quietly. "I have been busy."

"But why have you stayed away all this time in that horrid place? I am sure I wish some one would burn it down, every inch: the only good it does is to annoy and worry you."

"It won't do so any more, Fanny," said her father.

"Why?"

"Do you want me to talk about these matters to you in such a dress? No. You are fit for a fairy's court, or a pantomime—you must not vex your little

head with such matters. You must go and enjoy yourself, and afterwards you shall hear all about it. And where are you going to-night?"

"To Mr. Helstone's house. Mamma is going with me," she added, hastily. "You know he has no women relatives of his own to look after him; and as he wanted to have some friends come to his house, mamma said she would make the arrangements for him. That's why we are going so early to-night, although mamma has been there all day."

"I hope you will be very merry, and enjoy yourself," said her father; and he turned his face to the pale green twilight that had now succeeded the red flush of the sunset. There was a strange look in the old man's eyes as he, in the dusk of the room, confronted that clear metallic glow.

"But you, papa—indeed you have been overworking yourself. You seem quite miserable and ill."

"No, no, no, my girl," said he, kindly. "Go and finish your preparations; I want to talk to your mother."

For Mrs. Glencairn had just entered the room.

"So you have come home at last," said she, when Fanny had left. "I hope your labour has done some good."

"Perhaps I had better tell you afterwards," said Glencairn, "what I have done."

"Nothing you are likely to tell me will affect my spirits at this party, if that is what you mean," said his wife, as she tried to button a white glove round her wrist.

"I have sold off my business," he said.

"And a good job too," was the calm reply.

He was, in spite of his own languor and sadness, thoroughly astonished. Had she, then, means which rendered her independent of his good or bad fortune? The mere supposition sent a new thrill of pain into the old man's heart; but he was growing accustomed to such slights and insults.

"I see nothing for it but my seeking some place as a shopkeeper or clerk, where I can get a settled salary."

"Indeed!"

The glove was now buttoned, and she was examining the tassel of her fan—the fan that Helstone had given her. She betrayed no surprise whatever.

"And, of course, the first step to enable us to live within such a limited income will be to leave this house."

She looked up with a sudden start: the necessity of the case had struck home.

"I hope you will not have to do that, for Fanny's sake," she remarked, with an affected carelessness.

Their further conversation on this point was interrupted by the arrival of Helstone, who had come for Mrs. Glencairn and her daughter in a neat little brougham he had just purchased. Mr. Glencairn received him somewhat coldly, while Mrs. Glencairn went off to fetch Fanny.

"So I hear Charlie Bennett has made his way into the Prussian army," said Helstone.

"Yes."

"I hope he may be more successful in that than in his painting."

"Do you think there is much chance of a war?" asked Glencairn, after a pause.

"Why, no," said Helstone; "unless

Austria and Prussia have a deeper object in view than the settlement of the duchies. We could well spare a few thousand men being killed to put Prussia at the head of a consolidated Germany, because she has elements of permanence in her constitution, and the future peace of central Europe would atone for these deaths. But if Austria takes that position, we shall only have the recurrence of war among impossibly-assorted states. I never could understand, though, why two nations could not test the strength of their respective armies without making that test the power of killing. Why mightn't they turn them into railroad-making or tunnel-hewing, and submit to be vanquished by those who were the most expert? When my father could get no birds, he used to shoot falling leaves with much enjoyment. Why

must armies try their skill in only one direction?"

At this moment Mrs. Glencairn and Fanny appeared — in state. Helstone turned to Mr. Glencairn, and said,

"I am very sorry we did not know you would return to-night, or I should have asked you to join us. As it is, if you would care to——"

"Thank you," said Mr. Glencairn, with a sad smile, "I am not the proper sort of guest for such a gathering. I hope you may all enjoy yourselves."

So they went, and he was left alone. He sat there in the dusk, until the dusk grew dark, pondering over the singular position into which his family and himself had fallen.

He knew that he was gradually becoming more and more estranged from them. His interests were not their in-

terests; his cares not their cares. They seemed to live in another sphere, and to regard him from thence with a sort of sublime compassion. Not even his misfortunes were potent to touch them; they were removed from him, independent of him, and therefore careless of his fate.

The terrible mystery of this change lay like lead upon his heart—crushing him down with its cold weight. He dared no longer ask himself the cause of this too apparent change; for once or twice already, when so dreaming and doubting, a flash of hell-fire had broke across the sepulchral darkness as he felt tempted to recall the ominous words which Charlie had uttered. Shuddering backward from this horror, he had prayed to Heaven for light and consolation; and dared no more look behind him on what had wellnigh seared his soul.

Still he sat there, thinking, thinking; but neither the present nor the future would clear itself to his mental vision. And at last, while a faint luminous haze, from a newly-arisen crescent moon, stole into the dark chamber and vaguely lit up the objects around him, he knelt down, crossed his hands above his head, and wrestled with God as Jacob wrestled with the angel in the night.

"O Lord, give me light. Thou hast watched over this family, and kept us together through so many years. If it is Thy pleasure that we should be separated, in act or in thought, from each other, teach me to recognise Thy hand in the change. O God, give me to know what or who has wrought this change; and whether Thy merciful dispensation comes in punishment or in kindness. Thy ways are dark to me—I can see nothing—I am

alone in the world, and lost, if Thou withholdest Thy light from me Let me not cry in vain, O Lord, but send me some of Thine own clearness of vision to comfort the fading years of my life."

CHAPTER IV.

THE STRUGGLE DECIDED.

"HERR MAJOR," cried Marie, tapping at the door of her father's bedroom, "here is a letter from Charlie, which I have opened and read, and he is very well; and there is quite as good news in this morning's paper."

"What news?" said he, opening the door. He had been on the point of going down to breakfast.

"The newspaper," said Marie, in German, remembering the regulation, "says the dispute will be referred to the Diet, and that there may be no war."

It was the morning of the 7th of June.

"The newspaper!" growled the Major, as he went downstairs, with his hand on his daughter's shoulder. "You will see in a few days our Prussian eagle tear in pieces that old bundle of rags they call the Diet."

"And there will be war?" said Marie, timidly; her old enthusiasm about Prussia having changed entirely within the past few weeks.

"Let me see what Charlie says," he murmured, as he sat down at the table. "'4th of June, 1866.' Why doesn't he write in German? 'My dear Uncle,—I cannot date this letter from any place, for I do not know where I am.' Eselskopf! did not I tell him to study all the geography of Silesia, Bohemia, and Saxony while he had plenty of time in Neisse? 'We are now marching towards Kirsch-

berg, and it is supposed that the immediate destination of the whole of the first corps is Landshut."

Kirschenfeld hastily got up, and fetched a map of Middle Germany, which he laid on the table.

"Herr Gott—I see it all. I have been mistaken. I thought they would make Saxony the battle-ground, and make it the spoil of the conqueror. Landshut? And there is a good road, I remember, leading almost straight down to Josefstadt; and easy communication with Breslau, and Liegnitz, and Görlitz. The first corps at Landshut? And what if the rest of the Silesian army lie about Glatz or Neisse—and all at once——But let me see what Charlie says."

He returned to the letter.

"'Your recommendations have been of the utmost value. General B——

at once secured my being transferred to my present company; and we of this first corps believe we shall have the thick of it. We expect the Crown Prince to come down here at once. You will have seen that he has been appointed the Military Governor of Silesia; but everybody knows what that means. The preparations now going forward make it certain that we are to cross the frontier at some point or other.' "

Herr Kirschenfeld stopped, with some alarm on his face.

"Marie," he said, "you remember me telling this young man, who thinks he knows all the movements of an army, that he had better not write letters of information home, else he would be shot."

"I do, Herr Major; but how have they allowed him?"

A new idea seemed to strike the old

soldier; and as he turned over the envelope, a cunning smile stole over his fine, honest face.

"Franked by General B—— himself! Fancy the impudence of the young scoundrel! Very well. 'I have got to like the country beer very much; and hope not to have to pay the postage of this letter, for all our available coin is scarcely sufficient to slake our thirst.'"

The Major burst into a hearty laugh.

"I told you, canary-bird, he would learn how to eat and drink. Oh, you will see him a different man when he comes back—a very different man, I promise you. He will have life and vigour in him; he will not look as if he was dissatisfied with God for allowing him to be born. You will see him with a brown face, and a straight back; and he will eat his dinner like a man, and have common sense, and be proud

that women are fond of him. We have no womanish men in our army—no! he will come back to us as a man worthy to be shaken by the hand."

Marie said nothing. She seemed absent and dreamy; she had not her father's buoyant contempt for chance; and consequent anticipations of coming good.

"'I have no time to write any more; we shall be again on the march in a few minutes. Tell Marie I have become as bigoted a Prussian as herself, and am preparing a little book for her of sketches of my companions' faces, and of the country people we meet.'"

That was all the letter—hurriedly and badly written on grey paper, the surface still retaining particles of the sand with which the ink had been dried.

There was not much in it; but that little had a profound effect on the old

soldier. He finished his breakfast hastily, and then went into the library. When Marie, an hour afterwards, went to seek him out, she found the whole place — tables, chairs, and floor — covered over with maps and plans, while the Major himself was standing in the middle of a circle of open volumes — histories of Germany, descriptions of Napoleon's campaigns, lives of Gustavus Adolphus, Frederick the Great, &c. &c.

"Papa, why did not you ask me to help you in getting out these books?"

He started at the sound of her voice, and turned to meet her with a guilty look on his face.

"I—I could not think of troubling you, darling," he said, hastily.

She was surprised at his evident embarrassment — there was even an extra tinge of red on that part of his face

which was not hidden by the white moustache and whiskers.

"May not I assist you, papa?"

He looked at her bright, intelligent eyes with a sort of consciousness that his labour would be much the better of their aid; but, as she was soon to discover, it was not his purpose then to show her whither his labour tended.

"No, canary-bird, you have enough to do with your household duties. Besides, how can you come in? Every inch is occupied, and I can't afford to give you standing-room."

So soon as she was gone, however, he gathered together most of the plans, and put them in a corner. Then he began that measured pacing up and down the room which always seemed to give him relief when he was a prey to any intense excitement. And on this occasion there

was no mistaking the troubled look of his eyes.

"They are all going down now," he muttered, "all going down to fight the old bigoted Austria—from Pommern, and Brandenburg, and Westphalen, and Posen, and Sachsen—all my brothers going down, and I remain here! I have even sent this poor Charlie there—and I remain at home. God, it is too hard. I cannot stay any longer—I should die the moment I heard that an Austrian cannon had been fired, and some one of my brothers killed, and I here in England. This accursed England!—it has made me no better than an Englishman—I have no regard but for my own comfort—I let other men fight for me, and am glad if I escape and do not have to pay much taxes;—I have no more spirit, no more love for my country, no more remembrance of my country's history, no

more desire to do good to my country, than an English shopkeeper. And my brothers will say, 'Oh, there is old Kirschenfeld. He knew how to fight once; he was a good Prussian once; he would have given up his life to our Germany at one time. But now he is an Englishman, and a woman, and stays at home.'"

He again opened out that fatal "Karte von Mittel-Deutschland" which, with Charlie's letter, had so stirred up the old lion; and carefully, with his forefinger, which was not quite steady, he traced the line of the Iser, Riesen, and Habelschwerdter Gebirge, noting the direction of the roads which crossed or run through gaps in the chain of hills. And if he paused to consider how the inequalities of the Prussian boundary would be obviated by its extension to a straight line drawn from Mittelwalde to Troppau, he doubtless

piously thought that such an acquisition of territory would be a great glory to God and an honour to his native land. The Prussian view of robbery is one of the highest idealizations to which the human intellect has as yet given birth.

"In a week or two," he continued, muttering to himself, "a noise will come from this quarter to make Europe tremble. And during that time, with all my brothers rejoicing in the wild turmoil, in the splendid struggle to place our Preussen in the front of Germany, to protect, and guide, and strengthen the old Fatherland, I shall be sitting and listening, and every battle will heap disgrace on my head. And when I go over there, they will take me into their rooms and show me the photographs hung up, and they will say, 'That is our Karl, that is our Friedrich, and they are lying buried down in Bohemia.

They were brave lads, and they died for Preussen.' They will take me into the churchyard, and show me a big stone, all hung round with wreaths, and say, 'Our General is buried there. He, too, died in Bohemia, for the sake of our Preussen.' They will take me into their houses, and show me beds with wounded men lying in them, and say, 'That is Johann Grünstein. He was wounded in Bohemia, for the sake of Preussen, and we have to give his mother charity, for she is a widow, and he cannot work.' And then they will turn to me—my God!—and they will look me in the face. What shall I say? I shall see them weeping for their brothers and sons left away down there, buried in bleak fields, heaped together under the clay; and what shall I say to stop their grief? I cannot do it! That is worse than death—that is worse than parting with Marie.

I must go with my brothers." At that moment he heard Marie singing; and the refrain came faintly to him:

"Scheiden, ach! scheiden, scheiden thut Weh!"

He stopped, and his face became very pale.

"Scheiden thut Weh! My poor girl does not know yet what parting is; how will she bear *this* parting? She has scarcely a friend in England. How blind it was of me to think she needed no friend but myself! And yet I cannot help it—I must go—I cannot bring the disgrace upon me of letting all my brothers fight for me—I must go!"

She was singing downstairs, and the door of the room was shut. But still he heard, with a painful distinctness, that sad refrain,

"Scheiden, ach! scheiden, scheiden thut Weh!".

The mental irresolution of that moment was a physical agony to him, as any one could have seen by his bloodless lips, his troubled eyes, and trembling hand. The two most powerful emotions of which he was capable were struggling for mastery, and they were of such almost equal strength as to make the contest a fearful one. One would not have credited this big, frank, rough old soldier with much imagination; but without much imagination how was it at all possible for him to combat his present, actual affection for Marie with the prospect of the distant and future duties which awaited him in eastern Germany? When at last the decision came to him—when, with a severe effort of judgment, he had settled which was his most powerful motive—he was somewhat calmer, but he was cold and stern. He had chosen;

and was resolved to abide by his choice.

Marie saw little of him until the evening, when dinner brought them together. She then fancied that he was in a manner defiantly harsh to her, as if he wanted to accustom her to such usage. His harshness, of course, went no further than a studied silence, a refusal to accept her little attentions, and so forth; but it was so marked, and so unusual, that she was astonished and pained.

After dinner he rose. It had been his custom to have his coffee and cigar in the next room, where he could sit, and dream, and hear Marie play the wild, sad ballad-music of the north of Germany. On this occasion, however, he said,

"Marie, send my coffee up to the library. I will smoke there."

She regarded him for a second with a

sort of timidity, and then she went forward to him and looked him in the face.

"Papa, you are not angry with me?"

"Why should I be angry with you?" he said, coldly enough.

The reply sent something into her eyes which made his heart quake. It was in these moments of sudden emotion that she most resembled her mother; and a quick pain throbbed in the old soldier's breast when he saw the chance wound he had inflicted. He drew her towards him, and kissed her, and said to her (with a choking in his throat),

"Marie, you must not doubt my love for you. You must not do that, at any time. Did I pain you, canary-bird? I am very sorry, and you must not think of it—and—and God bless you, my darling!"

He turned away, leaving her almost terrified by the intensity of his speech.

She did not know what had caused this crisis, but she knew it had been a crisis, and she was alarmed and fearful. There was that in her father's manner which she had not been accustomed to observe there.

He went into the library, and shut himself up among his books and plans, as soon as the coffee had been served. Marie herself took up the little tray; and while she was pouring out the coffee, and getting a cigar, her father chatted kindly to her, as if to smooth down the remembrance of his previous harshness.

"And I had such a singular dream," he said to her, in English, "last night. I dream that there was a strange feeling come round my heart, as if to draw it away and choke it, and I could not breathe nor move, only suffer pain. I knew that if it went on another moment,

I should die. Then I became conscious of my sleep, and I knew that if I did not wake instantly, my heart would only give one more gasp, and I should die. I knew it, and was sure of it, and did not care much. Then I woke, and I found myself cold as ice, and stiff, with a load on my heart. I began to tremble, and then I felt warm air, like a warm breath, outside my forehead; and I put up my hand to my brow, and felt it like lead; and then my heart begins to beat much and strong, and I get warm again. Was it not strange?"

"It was more than a dream, then, papa?" said the girl, with a vague terror.

"It was only in the dream I thought I die; when I wake, it is all right."

"And this has made you sad all day?"

"Oh no. I forgot it. It is the war

I have been thinking of," he said, with some embarrassment; and then she left the room.

It was now growing dusk. He did not call for a lamp, nor did he light one of the candles which stood on the mantelpiece. He did not heed the darkness, for he opened no more books, spread out no more maps. Sometimes he walked up and down the room, his tall figure occasionally catching a dull gleam of orange from the lamps in the street; and sometimes he stood at the window, gazing blankly down on the pavements.

By-and-by, however, he lit one of the candles, and placed it on a corner of the table, spread out some writing-paper, wheeled round an arm-chair, and sat down.

Tremblingly he wrote the following words, in German:—

"Marie, my little girl, I cannot speak to you; I must write to you. All the day I have tried to tell you;—then I have looked in your face, and been silent. Darling, you are a good daughter, a brave girl, a true German—listen, and hear what your country says to you. She says, 'All my sons and daughters are giving up everything for me: what will you give? You are no English girl. You are now a German woman; you have the thoughts of a woman. Your family has done something for Germany: will you do nothing for her?' This is what she says, Marie. What will you tell her? You will tell her that you are not selfish, that you are a brave girl, and a German girl, and you would not ask me to remain at home with you when all your friends are going into the war. You are a soldier's daughter, Marie; you will not ask your father to bring disgrace

upon himself and you. My little girl, how can I remain at home with all my people going to the war? How can I do it? Be not angry with me that from you I—— "

That was all he wrote. He heaved a deep sigh, sank back in the chair, and remained immovable.

It was, perhaps, half an hour thereafter that Marie came up and entered the room. She was unwilling that her father should remain so long alone. When she opened the door, she saw that her father was lying back in the chair, the apartment being duskily lit by the red glow of a single candle.

"You have not shut the shutters, papa," she said, as she went forward to the window.

"Won't you come downstairs?" she asked, when she had finished fixing the bar.

He did not answer.

"Papa, you have fallen asleep when you promised me you would never fall asleep at this hour. Wake!"

He made no answer yet.

"Herr Major! You will waken with palpitation of the heart," she said, in a louder voice.

She passed round by the back of the chair, in order to waken him, for he had always been averse to sleeping at this hour.

She put her hand forward so as gently to touch his cheek—and she drew it back as if it had been stung by a viper.

She went round, with one quick step, so that she could see his face—lit up as it was by the glare of the candles—and the next moment there rang through the house a single, wild, sharp shriek, as she staggered and fell forward.

Yes, it rang through the house; it might have rang through twenty houses. A servant girl was the first to run into the room; and she, too, had almost fainted with horror to find Marie, cold and white, lying across the knees of her father, who was cold, and white, and dead. Stone dead; with the unfinished letter before him, and the dull glow of the candle on his immovable features and rigid figure.

It was terror that had caused Marie to faint. When the noise of the people in the room recalled her, she opened her eyes, and seemed to have no idea of the appalling catastrophe that had happened. Her senses were quite stunned; and she went forward, with a terrible calmness, to the chair in which her father sat, his head hanging down on his breast, as if he was asleep. She took his hand.

"Herr Major!"

The servants wanted to take her away; but she stood there, with a confused look in her eyes—a look not of pain, but of dull insensibility. And she was motionless, and nearly as pale as marble.

Her eyes wandered to the letter which was lying almost within touch of her father's hand, and she took it up. She read it impassively until she came to the last broken sentence and she repeated the words mechanically,

"*Sei mir nicht böse dasz ich von dir*——."

"My father! my father!" she cried, letting the paper drop, as she sank down at the dead man's feet.

CHAPTER V.

THE GHOST DISSECTED.

FANNY was seated in Mr. Helstone's drawing-room, reading a volume of French plays. He was standing on the balcony outside, enjoying the warm breath of a June wind, which came up from the garden laden with the perfume of mignonette; and they occasionally spoke to each other when Fanny was not too much absorbed in her pursuit. One might say for her that she was now studying French with an assiduity she had never exhibited in her school-days—an assiduity which revealed a distinct purpose.

"How easy it is to read French," she said, "and how difficult to speak it decently. I am almost afraid to think of going to France."

"You need not be ashamed of yourself," said Helstone, carelessly. "The mimetic faculty of acquiring languages is a poor one—transmitted to us from the ape, I believe."

"I wish I had it, though," said Fanny.

"By the way," continued Helstone, with more animation, "an adept in the art might be of great service to us by shutting himself up in the monkey cage of the Zoological Gardens, and learning the language. He would be able to act as interpreter when the Aborigines Protection Society takes monkeys under its charge, as it must in time."

"There you are off again," said Fanny, with a pretty whimper. "I believe you

spend all the morning weaving those things in your brain, to be ready to hang them out to dry on any chance little peg I offer you."

"And I know the man," continued Helstone, "who ought to get the appointment—my friend Mr. Willoughby Oakes. I really thought him a fair, honest, average human being, and did not dislike him, until, all at once, his husk of humanity dropped, and the chimpanzee stood revealed, gifted with the apish qualities of a thousand ancestors."

"What a poor revenge to say so," she remarked, with a quiet smile. "You never discovered his origin until he stopped your five guineas a week."

Helstone laughed outright. He would willingly have borne a heavier sarcasm for the pleasure of admiring his companion's shrewdness.

"Isn't it singular that I was deceived so long?" said he. "But the best way to learn nothing about a man's real nature is to get acquainted with him. When I asked other people about Oakes, I found he was one of those men who have done immeasurable harm to my profession, such as it is. Commercial men will tell you they can buy any paper in London. It isn't true; but it is the conduct of such sneaks as my gentle friend that produces the impression. Why, the animal, if he dared, would go and abuse the very angels of Heaven, simply because they don't advertise in his columns."

"You are getting wickeder every day," she said.

"He asked me if I was married," he continued, turning towards her.

"Indeed."

There was a fine indifference in her tone. She had taken up the book again.

"He seemed very desirous to know the theory and practice of private marriages; and I fancy he was, in spite of his objections, striving to square them with his previous convictions about legislative morality. I wonder if the miserable wretch was thinking that he might, after all, have married that girl whom he sent to America. But how could he, with his intensity of respectability, adopt a form of marriage which is already all but universal among our lower classes?"

"Is it so?" she asked.

"There is no doubt of it. Without a grain of philosophical theory, these people have anticipated the necessary change of our opinions on that subject, with better consequences than one might have expected."

"I don't wish you to speak about that," she said, hastily.

"Or I could tell you," said Helstone, to himself, "that it is not among the lower classes that systematic seduction has become an art—that, in spite of poverty, coarseness of personal form, and the necessary hideousness of disease, the fidelity existing between these poor men and women, and their fondness for their children, is one of the wonders of modern life."

Fanny generally refused to hear him speak of these matters, conscious that she did not meet him on equal terms. Many a good cause has been worsted in discussion, not on account of its own weakness, but because of the ignorance of its advocate. She had once properly replied to him, "You must not say such things to me when my father is not here to set you right."

But the mere fact of his having introduced the subject was sufficiently singular; and not less so the easy indifference with which she forbade its being continued. It was apparently a question which they had already discussed and settled.

She had, however, turned round her chair so as to observe him while he spoke. He was standing, as I have said, outside the open window, on the light iron balcony, and was apparently attentively regarding some potted geraniums which were placed there. By-and-by she saw him go through an extraordinary performance, which puzzled her exceedingly. He pulled one of the flowers, held its scarlet petals close up to his eyes, then shut both his eyes, and pressed his fingers on the lids. This he repeated several times.

He then went upstairs, and returned

with a photograph in his hand. When he had again gone out into the strong sunlight, he did with the portrait what he had done with the geranium.

Then he came into the room, and put the photograph on the table.

"I have been trying," he said, "whether the eye can retain the picture of anything as well as the memory. Mine cannot. When I shut my eyes, I see nothing of what was last presented to them; but I find I can, by an effort of the brain, recall the features of any object I have seen. When some time has passed since my seeing the object, I have to use considerable efforts of recollection to produce the picture. But in any case it is my brain which sees them, not my eyes."

"Well?" said Fanny, wondering whither all this tended.

"Must I explain?" he asked. "If I cannot recall an image with my eyes shut, why should I be able to do so with my eyes open, while other objects are being crowded on the retina? This vision of which I speak is able to paint out so much solid wall; and the fun of it is that it moves—crosses the retina, obliterating everything in its path."

Fanny's fingers mechanically took up the photograph which he had laid on the table.

"Try," he said, "if, with any amount of gazing on that photograph, you can so impress your eyes as to be able to recall it when you shut them. You will remember what the picture was like, and see it in your brain, but not before your eyes."

Fanny lifted the photograph, and looked at it. It dropped from her fingers, as she uttered a slight cry.

Then she glanced towards Helstone in a frightened way, as if she would fain have concealed her perturbation; but she saw in his eyes that he, too, was amazed.

"Fanny," he said, "what do you mean? Why should that picture terrify you?"

It was the picture of the woman whom she had seen on the night of her father's mishap, whom she had seen also at the foot of Helstone's garden. There could be no mistaking the strongly-marked features, their haughty, intellectual, and passionate look, the dark eyes and rich hair. But what struck Fanny most was that while the woman in the photograph was evidently younger than the woman she had seen—that is to say, the picture seemed to have been taken some years back—the dress in both cases was identical. It was a style of dress which was

probably fashionable when the photograph was taken; but which, on a person of good appearance in the year 1866, had seemed to Fanny *bizarre* and remarkable.

All this she grasped in a moment, as she remained silent, unable to collect her energies so as to answer Helstone. She knew that there was something connected with this woman which was unpleasant, and might be even terrible; and as her sunny nature shrank from contact with anything disturbant or repulsive, she would fain have avoided the matter altogether.

But it was too late. Her involuntary cry had startled Helstone in a way that few things were able to startle him; and she saw herself compelled to reveal that interview which she had consigned to oblivion, and had herself almost forgotten.

"You don't mean to say, Fanny, that you knew that lady?"

"No," said Fanny.

"Then why were you frightened? Why are you so embarrassed now? Why don't you speak?"

"Give me time," she said, "I—I—it seems to me a sort of dream, and we had better speak no more about it—that is——"

"But I want you to tell me simply why you were frightened when you saw the photograph."

"I was not frightened."

Helstone saw that his hasty manner was a mistake. When driven into a corner in this way, the gentle, bright-hearted young girl became obstinate and dogged, stood at bay like a hunted deer, and dealt such thrusts as the growing nature of her mother within her

enabled her to do. He had once or twice awakened this slumbering antagonism and bitterness in her; and the result was of a kind that he did not wish to revive.

"Fanny!" he said, in a gentler voice, "why need there be any secret in this matter between us? There is nothing in it to harm either of us in any way."

"Then let it rest," said she in a low voice.

"That would only be to form a secret where there need be no secret. Come now, let us meet each other frankly. This lady I knew several years ago. I dare say I was a little fond of her. However, she died——"

"She died!" echoed Fanny, faintly.

Helstone merely stared at her, a vague alarm on his face.

"What do you know about her?" he asked.

"I—I saw her the evening you and I were near Clapham Road——."

"Yes, yes; I know," said Helstone, hastily. "You saw a woman resembling her—the resemblance being sufficient to deceive me. I was much terrified, I know: who would not be, on seeing a person known to have died years before? But *then* I was only mistaken; at other times I have seen an actual apparition—that is to say, I have fancied that I saw it. You know why I brought down the photograph. It was to try if my eyes really had some special weakness or sensitiveness allowing them to be worked on by an excited brain. I can discover nothing of the sort, however."

She sat quite silent now; although he regarded her as if expecting to hear her make an explanation.

"That is all you know about it?"

"Yes," she replied, firmly.

"What a singular resemblance that woman we passed must have borne to this picture!" he said, cheerfully. "No wonder that I got a fright. And now, when I think of it, might not the other figures I have seen be all the time this quiet, respectable workman's wife, walk ing about the streets in search of cheap legs of mutton and pretty shades of calico?"

He considered this view of the matter for some time; but finally shook his head with a comic dolefulness.

"No. I must hold by my weak eyes or nervous brain. For while the workman's wife seemed to me to be dingily dressed, the ghosts that I saw, with the most charming consistency of detail, wore precisely the dress you see in the picture."

How gladly would Fanny have allowed

the matter to glide off in this way, sheltered by her silence! But again Helstone's glance fell upon her; she became guiltily conscious of it; and then—in a quick harsh manner, as if she had been goaded by him into replying—she said,

"The woman [you think was a workman's wife did wear this dress you see in the photograph—exactly. What is more, I saw her long after that time, in broad daylight, down at the foot of the garden there, on the other side of the wall, and then she wore the same dress."

All this she uttered hurriedly, with her eyes fixed on the floor. When she ventured to look up, Helstone had mastered himself with a splendid effort of self-control, and betrayed his emotion only by a quick breathing.

"You saw her?" he said.

"Yes."

"And she was near you?"

"She was not six yards from me."

"There were no traces of sulphur about her?" he asked, with a forced smile on his face; "or did she disappear in blue flame?"

"She was as much alive as you and I are now."

He broke into a loud laugh, which seemed not to harmonize very well with his white lips. But the next moment he had drawn a chair to the side of Fanny, caught one of her hands in his, and put his arm round her waist. She felt that his hands were quite cold, and that he trembled from head to foot; while the expression of his face, as he cowered in to her side, was that of abject, childish fear.

"Fanny," he said, in a low, soft, imploring voice, "you see what a coward I

am—it is a physical weakness I cannot help—I shield myself from this horror by knowing you are here and with me. But when you go—what then? It cannot be a weakness of my own eyes, since you have seen it twice; and should it appear to me here, when I am alone, when I can no longer believe my nerves at fault, one of two things will happen—insanity or death."

"Why?" she asked, scarcely less afraid than himself. "Why should you be afraid to see this woman, who is as much alive, I tell you, as I am?"

He shivered slightly.

"I, too, could have sworn that she was alive, while I knew her to be dead."

"You cannot know her to be dead," said Fanny, gently, "when she is alive. I was too near her to be deceived. I saw her breathe, saw her look all round the

garden with her eyes, and her face looked like a naturally pale face reddened with the cold wind."

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because I was afraid."

"Oh, you were afraid! Why were you afraid?"

"Because—because," stammered Fanny, "I thought there was something disagreeable about the whole affair—I knew it was the same woman whom you had seen on that other evening."

Helstone rose suddenly, and began to walk up and down the room, chafing his hands to recall the circulation.

"Alive. You are sure she is alive. Why not?"

There was a thin, hard smile on his face now.

"Two can play at a practical joke, how-

ever, he continued. "There is an easy means of testing the corporeality of the vision. If this phantom have the ratiocination of a human being, will it not suddenly withdraw from the small round muzzle of a pistol? It might almost scream—nay, have the weakness to faint. Is it not a capital idea?"

"I don't like you to talk in that way," said Fanny, looking up. "You frighten me. You seem to be under the influence of another being altogether."

"Yes," he said, bitterly; "is it not absurd that circumstances should condemn us to be melodramatic? Nature seems to have a passion for private theatricals, and makes us her puppets."

Fanny went to him and put her hand softly upon his arm.

"You do not deceive me," she said.

"You are saying one thing and thinking another. You are thinking of this woman. Now tell me, since you know she is alive, will that affect *us*?"

"No."

"Not at all?"

"No," he answered, "whether she is alive or dead."

"Why should you be afraid of her?" continued Fanny; "and why does she follow you about so?"

"Have I not told you? Nature, thinking we do not sufficiently make fools of ourselves, dowers us with a demon who acts upon us as a sort of laughing-gas, and then she is amused by our antics. Now, do not ask me any more questions. I feel unwell. I shall lie down for half an hour."

He threw himself at full length on the sofa, and covered his eyes with his hand.

The knitting of his brows showed that it was not sleep he coveted.

"And I shall try to charm the demon out of you," said Fanny, with a smile, as she went to the piano.

She was not herself particularly easy at heart.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DISCLOSURE.

IT is the morning of the 30th of June, 1866. Over one of the squares in the west of London hangs the usual pall of silence; the very trees within the prim railings seem hushed into a sort of Sunday solemnity, and scarcely move a leaf. An awful respectability dwells upon the tall, mournful houses; two policemen, standing at a corner, have hardly a word to say to each other; and the organ-grinder who suddenly pierces the stillness with a shrill scream from "Robert le Diable" seems amazed at his own temerity.

A singularly-dressed woman passes the

policemen, and causes them to turn and regard with a blank curiosity her extraordinary attire, her ridiculous earrings and other ornaments, and her not very pleasing face. She walks up to one of the buildings, which has a fine portico and pillars outside, ascends the steps, enters the vestibule, and asks,

"Can I see Mr. Glencairn?"

The question is addressed to a servant in a plain green suit, with prominent calves, who has just risen from a large hall-chair placed in front of a table which displays an open volume and writing materials.

The tall man regards her with a languid indifference; and remarks, in a distant tone, as if he were conversing in a trance with the spirit of one of the people who lived in the ark, that he will take the visitor's name to Mr. Glencairn.

The woman, left alone, now betrayed considerable nervousness. She looked all round the great, gaunt hall, at the dusty portraits on both sides, at the broad staircase before her which was so thickly carpeted that the man who had spoken to her seemed to move noiselessly upward like a ghost. She picked threads out of her gloves, adjusted at least a dozen times a clumsy glass armlet she wore, and seemed to have a difficulty with her bonnet-strings.

In a few moments the man returned, came halfway down the stairs, and said, fixing his eyes vaguely on nothing,

"Will you step this way, ma'am?"

He did not see her. He did not seem to see anything. But he led her through a long library, gliding before her in that noiseless way; and she had just time to glance hastily at one old gentleman who was sitting writing at a table, and at

another who was poring over an immense volume nearly as big as himself, when she found herself conducted into a small adjoining chamber, and confronted by Mr. Glencairn.

"Good morning, sir," she said, with a nervous curtsey; "and I'm sorry to see you lookin' so poorly—I should 'ardly 'ave known you, sir, I believe."

No wonder she was struck by the difference between the sad-looking, broken-down old man before her, and the pleasant, genial, cheerful master whom she remembered. Driven by absolute necessity, Glencairn had applied to his former friends the promoters of this Scientific Institution for employment, and they had appointed him, at a small salary—the biggest they could afford to give him, however—to look after the herbarium which he had sold them. He also assisted the chief librarian

in his work, so that his office was not a mere sinecure.

And in this quiet labour he had been engaged for some time, reconciled to its loneliness by the delight of once more being able to look over that old treasury of reminiscences, his herbarium. He did not mind so much now the evident separation from his family that had occurred. He was even careless to inquire how his wife and daughter were living a fine, fashionable life, when the actual money he earned each week was two guineas. He did not trouble himself to ask how a couple of ladies could go to parties, concerts, and theatres, purchase jewellery, and have a constant succession of new and expensive dresses upon such an income. He passed the whole day in the Institution, and would willingly have remained there till bedtime. As it was, his evenings at home were generally

spent without company. Charlie was gone; Mrs. Glencairn and Fanny were usually out; so he sat and dreamed of old scenes and old faces, or wondered when his conscience would allow him to spend a few shillings in order that he might once again breathe the sweet country air.

He did not repine now. He had quiet, an interesting occupation, and he was glad to pass day after day in profound silence, broken only by the occasional wail of "M'apparì tutt' amor" from an asthmatic organ. But the anxiety and regret of the past had told upon him. He seemed a mere wreck of his former self; and the sad eyes, sunken cheeks, feeble gait, and dingy clothes of the old man presented a melancholy picture to any one who had known him in better days.

"Well, Mrs. Miguel," said he, kindly, "it is a long time since I saw you."

"And it would have been longer still, sir," said the queerly-dressed woman, "'ad I 'ad my way. It's no good news I've brought you, Mr. Glencairn."

He was struck by her embarrassed manner.

"Indeed," he said; "I'm sorry for that. But we must suffer patiently. I hope your bad news does not concern your daughter."

"Not *my* daughter, sir."

The old man seemed now to gather from this beating about the bush that it was concerning himself Mrs. Miguel had come to speak; and perhaps the marked accent of the "my" suggested a further thought.

"I do believe," she said, with sudden energy, "as I would sooner tell you what I've got to tell you about my own daughter. It's very 'ard that I should 'ave

to tell you—very 'ard indeed—but there's no 'elp for it, and I can't abide lookin' on any longer, though it will cost me my place. That's nothin' much, sir; for the Lord knows 'ow I 'ave been able to remain as long as I 'ave in that 'ouse, and her, as I knew a baby and young girl as pretty as ever I see;—I tell you, sir, I 'ad no very light 'art in comin' to you this mornin'."

"Sit down," said Mr. Glencairn, in a frightened way; "take a seat, Mrs. Miguel. I don't understand what you mean. Tell me what you mean."

He very soon understood what she meant. A few minutes afterwards he was standing there, silent, helpless, awe-struck, as though he felt the terrible horror at his heart a judgment from heaven which he dared not attempt to alleviate. The woman before him, sob-

bing bitterly, was suggesting incoherent palliations, blaming herself for having come, beseeching him not to think harshly of Fanny.

"For after all she is your daughter," she sobbed out.

"My daughter! She *was* my daughter."

These were the only words he uttered. Mechanically he took down his tattered-looking hat, buttoned up his old, thread-bare frock-coat, and turned to Mrs. Miguel. He seemed to struggle for utterance: then, with a strange expression on his face, he shook hands with her, and hurried away through the long library and down the broad staircase. Mrs. Miguel went after him, but when she got outside there was no one visible in the dull, still square.

He took the first southward-going 'bus he saw, and it was the wrong one. When he discovered his mistake, he found he had

been carried westward so far as to bring him into the region of Kensington. He got out, walked to the railway there, and took a ticket for Larkhall Lane Station, that being the nearest to his house. As the train took its slow round to the south side of the city, he seemed quite unaware of the delay.

Arrived at his destinaton, he had just ascended the steps leading up to the lane, when he saw two well-known figures before him. They were his wife and daughter; and the sudden sight of them caused him to seize hold involuntarily of the stone parapet of the bridge with his right hand. They were walking slowly. Both of them were handsomely dressed, and Mrs. Glencairn bore herself with the gait of an empress. And this young girl was so beautiful, so childlike, in spite of her finery, that her father's heart in a

moment leapt to a joyous denial of the fearful thing he had heard. All the way over in the train he had been looking back with a profound sadness on the successive steps by which she and her mother had drawn themselves away from him, and shuddered to think of the result of this estrangement. But were not those the very curls he had always loved and fondled—that the very cheek, soft as a pigeon's bosom, which he had so often caressed—that the very figure, slight and graceful, he had so often drawn towards him in the long bygone years when his daughter was still proud and fond of her father? In another moment he would have run towards her, and caught her to him, and kissed her, had not one dark shadow interposed. He remembered that it was in this very neighbourhood that Christian Helstone lived; that his daughter

had been accused of going to that fatal house every day; that her mother sometimes accompanied her.

He followed them; and in his heart he prayed to God that they might go up now to Clapham Common, and so leave him, for yet a few hours, the comfort of the possibility of her innocence. She was too young, too girlish-looking to be debased before his eyes—before the eyes of the father who had watched her sweet girlhood through so many years.

They left the main thoroughfare, and his heart was conscious of a dull, pained apprehension as he saw them advance slowly along the gravelled by-road. He quickened his steps. They opened the tiny iron gate, passed through the small front garden, and were about to ascend the steps leading to the door, when he overtook them.

He put his hand on Fanny's shoulder. She turned, saw her father, and shrank backward with a sudden whiteness on her face. Her mother at the same moment wheeled round and confronted her husband—at first with a frightened look, then with an insolent stare of defiance.

The old man trembled exceedingly; and yet his voice was firm.

"What takes you to this house, Fanny? what business have you here?"

The wretched girl cowered away from her father's steady glance; her terror being at once abject and pitiable. She had nothing to say; she had no prevarication with which to shelter herself: the unexpected appearance of her father had stunned her, overwhelmed her; and she read in his face the accusation he had not put into words.

"Fanny!" said her mother, sharply,

" recall yourself. Are we to be confronted this way in the public streets, because we pay an ordinary visit of ceremony ? "

" Woman ! " said Glencairn, with an assumption of that old authority which caused her to wonder and lower her eyes, " do not teach your daughter to lie. Have you not taught her enough already ? "

He turned to Fanny ; and the girl's face had grown white and sharp with fear.

" Is this true that they say ?" he asked, with a sternness and precision that showed how he would have given his heart's blood to have wormed out, to have forced from her, a true, trustworthy denial. " Is it true, Fanny, this that they say about you —that you are the mistress of the man who lives here, that you keep his house for him, that your mother helps you, that both of you get money from him ;—is this true ? Say to me, with God looking down

upon you, and pitying us all for these suspicions, that it is not true, Fanny! Why don't you speak? You dare not deny it?"

He remained motionless, with his lips slightly apart, his eyes fixed upon her, apparently terror-stricken by the silence which followed his words. She made a quick gesture, caught her mother by the arm, as if for safety, or as if to implore her to speak.

"It is not a question for a father to put to his daughter," said Mrs. Glencairn, her natural fury struggling with the awe inspired by the terrible nature of this meeting.

He paid no attention to her. His eyes followed Fanny, and she looked up in a piteous agony of fright, as a wounded hare looks up at the dogs that are about to devour it. The unhappy father saw this

expression of terror and pain in the face of his child with such feelings as may not here be mentioned.

There are few occasions in the life of a human being when circumstances so combine to confound his ordinary sense of right and wrong, and make the best of his motives look like a monstrous iniquity.

"You dare not answer me? You dare not deny it?" he asked.

"I—I—am m——" she said, with a great hysterical sob which stopped her further utterance; and then she fell into her mother's arms.

Mr. Helstone had been contemplating this scene from one of his front windows. Divining the nature of the case, he now went along to the door, opened it, and descended the steps. He and Mrs. Glencairn half carried and half led Fanny into

the house; Mr. Glencairn standing mechanically looking on until they had disappeared and shut the door again. Not a word was said on either side.

He turned and walked away, with a quivering under-lip; and when he reached the corner of Larkhall Lane, he stopped, and looked wistfully back.

"God gives me one thing and takes away another," he said to himself; "and yet this is a sore thing to bear. He might have left me my little girl. Or if He had only kept her what she used to be, I could have parted with her, and said that hereafter I should meet her, and take her on my knee again and listen to her talk. She would always have been my girl, even if she passed away from us on a death-bed. Sad enough at the time, perhaps; but I know one death-bed that was sad, and now it grows more beautiful every day, for it

delivered into God's hands, to be kept beautiful for me, that which I hope to see in His good time. But my little girl—she and her mother have both gone from me, and what they are now is so hard to think of that I forget what they used to be."

Tears were rolling down the old sunken cheeks by this time. He turned and walked towards his empty home.

"The shadows are falling thick, God is hiding Himself in darkness, and my weak faith asks for a sign to show that His hand is still outstretched over us. In His mercy He will not allow this weak lamp of faith to be blown out; for then —for then—what would the future be without——"

He raised his head, and looked around him with a startled anxiety, as if to recall himself to the brisk, every-day

world in which he had lived and trusted so long.

"He is there, and Heaven is there, but just now He hides Himself in a thick darkness, He is angry with me, and His hand lies heavily upon me."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RELIEF OF ACTION.

BUT as he went along, his meditations became less introspective. He suddenly thought of Charlie, and that with one of those shocks of strong transitive sympathy which are frequently the outward symbol of a profound inward grief.

He thought of his last interview with Charlie, of their harsh parting, of the emotion which the young man must then have been suffering. The common nature of their respective positions now made him long to know something of his old friend; he would fain have seen and

spoken to him, were it only to assure him that there was bitter cause for his recalling that angry, unjust farewell.

Whoever has been shaken and stunned by an assault of grief like to that which Glencairn had just undergone, must know that nature, acting wisely and surely, as she has been taught to do, seeks to break through the dull after-lethargy of pain by provoking an irritating desire for action, and a peevish impatience and exaggeration of petty obstacles. Mr. Glencairn was now as anxious to put himself in communication with Charlie as if it were the only object weighing on his mind; and he at once thought of the Kirschenfelds as those most likely to know of the young man's whereabouts.

Soberly and calmly he went up to his house, and entered it with a strange feeling of loneliness. He passed into his own

room, and dressed himself in his best clothes;—he would pay as much respect to Charlie's friends as was possible. Then he left.

A brief glance into the Directory, lent him by a tradesman in the Clapham Road, showed him where Major von Kirschenfeld lived; and thither, by a succession of omnibuses, he made his way. By the time he had arrived at the house in Kensington, his immediate object had become quite important to him, and it was only in horrible moments of reflection—temporary flashes of memory—that he recalled the events of the morning.

He knocked at the door.

"Is Major Kirschenfeld within?" he asked, timidly.

The servant glanced curiously at the thin, tall old man, dressed with a sort of shabby respectability, who put the ques-

tion in a nervous, sad way. Somehow his appearance suggested to her that his mind was not quite right.

"You don't know, sir, that Major Kirschenfeld is dead?"

"Dead! Dead!" repeated Mr. Glencairn, with a shade of vexation in his tone. "But his daughter? Is she here?"

"Yes, sir. Would you like to see her?"

He entered the hall, sent a message to Marie, and in a few moments he was shown into the room where she awaited him. He had never seen her before; but now when his eyes rested on the figure of the young girl, dressed with a studied simplicity from head to foot in deep black, on her pale, fine, intellectual face, and on her large, sad eyes, he was moved with a sudden kindliness towards her. He went forward and took her hand in his.

"You will forgive me calling on you now," he said; "I did not know you had lost your father. But we are equal in that way—I have just lost my daughter."

Marie remembered very well the girl of whom her father had often spoken; and there was gentleness along with the pathos of her inquiry,

"Is she dead too?"

"She is not dead, God help her and me. I—I cannot pain you with my pain—you have plenty of your own, my poor girl. I came to ask you about Charlie—you know he and I parted in a sort of quarrel—I was in the wrong, and mistaken—and I should be more easy if I could say as much to him. I fear I had some hand in sending him away——"

"Oh no," she said, in that soft, low voice that was at once so musical and so mournful, "that was our doing. Prussia

took him as Prussia took my father from me. You do not know, sir, how my father died? He wanted to stay by me, he wanted to go and help our country, and the struggle broke his heart."

A servant entered and handed her a letter.

"Here," she said, "is the very news you want—a letter from Germany, which has arrived at this hour through some inaccuracy in the address."

She was still scanning the envelope.

"It is not in his handwriting," she remarked, in still a lower voice.

She tore it open, and ran her eye down the contents. Glencairn could see no change of expression in her face, but he was startled by one convulsive throb, and by the silence that followed. The letter fell into her lap.

"More yet—more yet," she said, with

a strange calmness. "But I can bear anything now."

"What is it?" said the old man.

She handed him the letter, without a word. He took it, and glanced over it.

"I cannot read German," he said.

"Must I do that too? Listen," said the young girl, with an extraordinary fortitude: '*In the neighbourhood of Trautenau, 27th June, evening. General B—— has directed the undersigned to inform Major von Kirschenfeld that Charles Bennett, volunteer private soldier in His Majesty King William's 43rd Regiment of the line, has been this evening wounded. The undersigned is further commissioned to say that the wound is severe, but not immediately dangerous.* STRAUMETZ, *Staff-Physician.*' That is all the letter says," she added. "You wonder I do not cry, and yet I am

a girl. But I do not seem to be able to feel any more pain."

"Poor Charlie!" said the old man, though he was far more touched by the heartrending composure of the girl before him.

She sat silent for a moment, her beautiful eyes clouded by the distant visions passing through her mind.

"I would go to him if I were not alone. If my father were alive, I know what he would say. He would say, 'Let us go, Marie, and bring him home. He has done enough for our Prussia; she cannot ask him to do any more. He has fought well, been wounded, and now we will bring him home and nurse him.' But—but you see, sir, I cannot do it."

That sense of her own weakness was more nearly breaking down her self-control

than she cared to show. She rose, and turned her face to the window; and while Glencairn could only see her fine profile against the light, he could not fail to perceive the hard emotional breathing which was struggling with her outward calm. Somehow he felt compelled to follow her. He drew near to her, and put his hand on her shoulder.

"I can speak to you as to a daughter of my own. Do you wish to go and see that he is not suffering without help? Have you the courage to go? I will go with you, if you like—but I have no money. I have no money, no home, no friends—my very wife and daughter are strangers to me. If I can be of use to you, if you have money enough for us both, if you want me to go with you as your father would have done, I will leave England very gladly. Let me be of some use to some one before I die—

to you, to Charlie. My own family have thrown me out, and who can wonder—who can wonder?"

There was a flash of glad light in her eyes. She did not hesitate for a moment as to her share in the matter. She had no fear of compromising herself. She saw only Charlie in that clear, comprehensive vision of hers, and he seemed to be waiting for her. Her courage was not to be dulled by any after-thought of appearances.

"I cannot ask you to do that for *me*," she said. "You do not know me. But you know Charlie, and he is your friend. You have never heard my father describe the sufferings of the wounded of an army which is on the march—you do not know how they are often left behind without attendance, medicine, sometimes without food, or you would understand why I say to you, without hesitation, Come! I have

money enough, surely—Charlie himself has plenty of money, given him by my poor father, if God allows him to come home and take it. And then you see," she added, with still a brighter light in her eyes, "I am a soldier's daughter—I am not afraid of soldiers, certainly not of my Prussian brothers—and they will help me to find him out, and I shall get permission from General B——, whom I saw once in Wittenberg, to bring him home, and we will fetch him all the way back to England —and then—and then—why, you know, he will be quite a hero."

There was a little sob in the midst of this gladness which the old man did not hear.

"You will see me quite at home among our soldiers," she continued, "and I shall walk as well as anybody, for we cannot expect to have a conveyance always; and when we find Charlie, we shall prepare a

little surprise for him—that is—that is, if he is well enough."

And these two sufficiently unhappy human beings took a singular delight in the mere prospect of this active work of charity. Nothing could exceed their anxiety to make the most of their time. Mr. Glencairn drove straight to the Scientific Institution, which was to see no more of him, got a letter from one of its most eminent directors, then went to the Foreign Office, and was in time to secure a passport. When he returned, Marie had, with the assistance of a single servant, got ready their travelling necessaries, and found no difficulty in persuading the old man, under the delicate excuse of want of time, to take with him such articles of her father's wardrobe as would ensure his better comfort on the long voyage. Self-reliant and courageous, businesslike and exact in her

arrangements for the journey, which was to begin that night, she yet found occasion to pay so many little attentions to him, to win over his heart with so much frankness and kindness, that he fell to calling her Marie in the most natural way, and interposed his paternal authority to prevent her over-exerting herself. And it was only occasionally that a dull spasm shot across his heart as he looked back upon the house he was leaving, and inwardly sighed, "If God had only given me such a daughter!"

A dark night, and a smooth passage, took them over to Calais, and next morning found them in Brussels. Then onwards, without stopping, to Cologne, where it was found necessary to pause to decide upon their further route. Down in Saxony the railways were broken; up in Hanover they had been restored, but that way was a

long one; while the whereabouts of the opposed armies was like a shuttlecock knocked hither and thither by the wild fancy of every ingenious correspondent and newspaper editor.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRESTED.

"WHEN God was painting on his universal canvas the most beautiful world of which he could think, he pencilled-in rushes along the edges of rivers to break the harsh lines of water and land."

So thought James Glencairn, as he leaned over the parapet of a bridge crossing the Neisse, and looked down on the still broad stream, with its dazzling dashes of blue and white, the mirrored sedges and tall weeds of its swampy banks, and the reflection of the

houses of Neisse, which seemed to quiver in the strong heat of the sun.

He was alone. Companies of Prussian soldiers, in loose linen trousers and blue coats, were being marched across the bridge to and from that quaint old town, which was hid away behind its angular fortifications; and the tanned faces of the men were streaming with perspiration as they looked forward to the prospect of drinking deep draughts of beer in some cool tavern-room. The people who passed him, with their swarthy cheeks and brilliant dresses, he looked upon with a vague curiosity, as though they were stage-characters. He could not understand a word they said. There was no link of humanity between them and him; and then the blinding white houses, the blue river, the yellow road, the tall poplars, and the bright costume of the peasantry

served only to heighten the theatrical look of the world around him.

Marie and he had arrived in Neisse that morning, in the expectation of being able to cross the frontier at once, and gain information from Staff-Physician Straumetz as to Charlie's whereabouts. But instead of finding themselves in direct communication with the army, they found that no one had any idea where the army was. One declared that Prince Frederick William was bearing on Olmütz, another that he and Prince Frederick Charles were together advancing against Prague, another that the second army was coming rapidly round to Troppau to prevent Benedek's gaining Berlin by way of Silesia. All concurred, however, in saying that direct communication with the army took place by way of Görlitz; and that it was better for the young English

lady who spoke German so well to go round there by rail, which she could do rapidly, than risk a vague personal search in a hired carriage. And to Görlitz, accordingly, they were going by the next morning's train.

Marie was in the "Weiszen Adler," writing letters; and Mr. Glencairn had ventured upon a short walk.

"You must take care," she had said; "the town is in a state of siege."

"I am not going to attack it, my dear," he replied gently, and went out.

When he had leant for some time on the bridge—long enough to have plunged him into a reverie—he turned and went down by the river's side, discovering there a road which led outside the fortifications into the open country. The hot air was laden with the resinous odour of some gigantic firs which lay, newly felled, among

the long grass of the riverbank; and occasionally tainted by the pungent tobacco-smoke of some passing soldier who had stolen away from his companions to have a quiet ramble. By the time he had wandered round to the south-east side of the town, he was quite alone.

Away down there at the horizon lay a pale blue line of hills; the intermediate country shimmered in the sun's glare; and here, at his feet, was a broad and shallow mere, half-choked with water-plants and humming with insect life. Himself in the shadow of an avenue of spreading poplars, he sat down on a bank to watch the shooting and flashing of bright wings, to listen to the croaking, and crying, and chirping of frogs, and wild-fowl, and insects, all concealed among the bright green sedges.

He was startled from his dream by

hearing footsteps behind him, and, turning, found a sentry eyeing him suspiciously. He now saw that from the end of the avenue stretched several lines of earthworks, and that out in the plain, half hidden by the glare of sunlight, a large number of men were working on a redoubt, like so many white ants on an ant-hill.

He rose and went on, attracted now and again by this or that brilliant flower among the grass, or at the water's edge. One or two of these he had never seen before; and his curiosity was stimulated in a high degree by such an unusual circumstance. He kept poring about—especially along the side of one of the earthworks which was quite overgrown with wild plants. Suddenly he saw above him, almost at the summit of the earthwork, a small pink, veined blossom which his

practised eye told told him belonged to the *Caryophyllaceæ*. It resembled, and yet did not resemble, a well-known English *lychnis*. Of course, he clambered up to the top, and, having seized the flower, looked around him for any other chance prize; failing that, he glanced over the view in front of him—the lines of fortification, the tall spires of the chief church of the town, the intervening patches of waste ground and corn-fields, and so forth.

"Was thun Sie da?" said a voice from underneath.

He now found the soldier confronting him, with an official hostility in his face. The old man came down, and with signs, and the help of a few words he knew, told the man that he did not understand him.

"Was machen Sie da? Wie heiszen Sie? Wo wohnen Sie?"

Glencairn's silence was sufficient proof.

"You will come with me," said the soldier, putting his hand on his arm.

Glencairn could not translate a word of this speech; but he understood the gesture.

"English," said the old man.

"To the devil with your English. I know better. You have come over from the Austrian side to look at our fortifications. Oh, we shall make you speak, Mr. Englishman!"

The soldier took him up to the guard-house, a small wooden erection, on the banks of a little stream that ran down into the marsh. There were several soldiers about, in every state of deshabille, in order to relieve themselves from the heat. The corporal of the guard had been sitting on the bank, letting his bare feet and calves swing in the water; and without taking

time to alter his dress, he hastily ran up to see what had disturbed the usual serenity of the distant outpost. The man who had captured the Austrian spy harangued his companions, and then the corporal demanded to see the prisoner's passport. Forunately, Glencairn understood him, and handed him that precious document which is supposed to ensure the safety of a British subject among all persons in all lands of the world.

"Vay," said the corporal, trying to make out the words, "Vay, Gayorgy, Veeleeam, Fraydereeck, Ayarl oaf Clarendone—was ist das ?—verstehe es nicht."

"That is, We, George William Frederick, Earl of Clarendon," said Glencairn, in good, rapid English, "and that is my passport, signed by him."

He pointed to the signature, to which the corporal now turned. With difficulty

he made out the scrawl of English letters, and said to his companions,

"Clarendon? Who is Clarendon? I never heard of Clarendon."

"Nor I," said another. "It is a farce, that paper. He is an Austrian. May the devil take me if General Lehwaldt does not open his mouth."

"Was ist Ihr Stand? Was für Geschäft haben Sie?" said the corporal then to Glencairn.

"I do not understand you," said he, with a smile; "you see my passport, and you ought to let me go."

"Go? That is English for gehen, nicht wahr? Oh, by my faith, you will go—you will go straight to General Lehwaldt."

He now ordered out a guard of two men, who, having affixed bayonets to their rifles, and assumed a military air, proceeded to escort the dangerous prisoner to the

town. One of the men had possession of his passport, and also of a small volume of drying paper in which some plants had been pressed. When this little book was opened in the guardhouse, to see if it contained any treasonable correspondence, nearly all the old man's carefully gathered flowers were flung on the floor, and accidentally trampled on. The corporal, fancying that this flower-pressing was only a blind, and that several scientific jottings at the end of the book had some tremendous political import, dispatched this volume to add to the testimony against the prisoner.

So it was, that when the strange, tall, peaked, irregular houses of Neisse were beginning to catch a reddish glow on their faces of brilliant white and green, Mr. Glencairn found himself marched through the town towards the Head Watch, a large room in an old stone building which stands in the

central square of the place. A full description of his crimes, past, present, and to come, having been delivered, along with the passport and drying-book, into the hands of the sergeant who was at the head of the watch, the latter politely requested Mr. Glencairn to be seated. There were about a dozen soldiers lounging about, beside the half-dozen supposed to be on duty, and the former took much interest in studying the bearing of the Austrian spy. The old man also found himself an object of curiosity on the part of a large crowd of people who had assembled in the square outside; being able to see them, through a small window, talking to each other in a mysterious way about this strange occurrence. While the two soldiers were relating the facts of the case to the sergeant, and he seeking counsel from that one, and peevishly differing from the next one,

Glencairn sat in mute ignorance of all that was going on, wondering how he could best communicate with Marie in order to get himself out of this trouble.

"You are charged, sir," said the sergeant, "with having been found examining the fortifications of this fortress, and with being unable to give an account of yourself. What have you to say for yourself?"

At this very moment, looking through the small but dirty window, Glencairn saw Marie briskly and cheerfully crossing the square. She was doubtless returning from having posted her letters—a duty which her father had taught her never to delegate to an hotel servant.

"See!" said Glencairn, starting up, as he saw this succour within his reach, and proceeding to the door of the place.

In a moment he was surrounded by a dozen soldiers, two of whom, in their

anxiety for the preservation of the State, stuck the points of their bayonets within an inch of his stomach.

"Sacramente! Would you try to run away?" cried the sergeant in German, dragging him back to the seat.

"I wanted to see my friend," said the old man in English. "If you would only send to the Weiszen Adler, you would learn all about me."

"Weiszen Adler? Sie wohnen be Weiszen Adler?"

The long and the short of it was that the sergeant, having communicated with the chief of police, to whom he had sent Mr. Glencairn's passport and the mysterious book which was supposed to threaten the existence of the Hohenzollern dynasty, received in return a message which directed him to imprison the suspected person until further orders.

Another guard of two men was now called out, who, accompanied by an officer from the police, escorted the prisoner once more through the narrow streets. He managed to ask one of them where he was going.

"In den Polizei-arrest," was the gruff reply.

"Arrested? For what?"

His interlocutor only shook his head; and in a few moments they had arrived at the prison. There was only one turnkey visible; and he, a small man, with red hair and squint eyes, having received the party into the courtyard, where his wife was taking down some clothes which had been hung up to dry, proceeded to empty the prisoner's pockets. His attention was greatly excited by a small magnifying-glass he found there.

"Was ist das?" he asked.

"Der Herr spricht gar kein Deutsch," said one of the soldiers.

"'S ist mir gleich. Kommen Sie mit," he said, with an easy smile, as he directed Glencairn to follow him.

The old man crossed the courtyard, was taken into a long corridor, and thence found himself in a narrow cell. He endeavoured to ask his gaoler if he could communicate with his friend at the Weiszen Adler; and at length was made to understand that his passport and other papers were lying with the police authorities for examination. The wonder was that the dangerous book which had frightened everybody was not sent to Berlin for the inspection of the War Minister. If King William and Count Bismarck, who were at that moment standing on the battle-field of Königgrätz had only known of the other evils which

threatened them, they would have had their attention less concentrated on the success of the Crown Prince's advance. For who could tell what treasonable conspiracy might not lurk behind such a mysterious phrase as

"*The abortive stamens of the common primrose are evidence that nature ceases to exert force, whatever she finds to be unnecessary. The herring is not unnecessarily prolific of spawn, because her spawn is liable to many accidents.*"

Translated by the imagination of a Neisse police inspector, these words might mean,

"*Von Moltke's assassination is fixed for the* 6*th instant. The whole of the Austrian Emperor's relatives are fighting against Benedek on behalf of the Archduke Charles; but his capture of Berlin, fixed for the* 10*th*

instant, will surmount all family jealousies. Death to Prussia!"

Glencairn sat down on his bag of straw, and the small gaoler turned the key in the lock.

"Gut sei schlafen!" he said, as he went.

Meanwhile, Marie, on returning from posting her letters, was much surprised to find that her companion had not come back from his stroll. She waited for more than an hour: there was no sign of his return. At last she went down into the chief room of the inn, in which some Prussian officers were seated, drinking beer or wine, and smoking bad cigars. She found the landlord there—a fussy, little, Jewish-looking man, with a perpetual smile, who insisted on talking English to her as an extreme form of politeness. He gloated on his English; and really the only words he could pronounce

decently were, "Sir Gentleman, good morning;" and "Lady, good morning."

"Has not my friend returned yet?" she asked of him in German.

"Sir Gentleman go. No back—no. No back."

"He must have made some mistake and got into difficulty," she said, "for he was to return within an hour. Where can I inquire for him?"

"You—you him will found, sometimes, by——"

"May I beg of you to speak German," said Marie. "I really cannot understand your English."

"Good," said he, with a flourish of his hand, as if it was not his fault that his courtesy was not appreciated; "if the gentleman has got into difficulties, the proper place to inquire for him is the office of the police inspector."

"Where is that?"

"If the young lady wishes to go there, I shall be delighted to go with her."

She readily accepted his offer, and together they went down through the gathering darkness towards the place. After two hours' waiting, and visiting this person and the next person, Marie at length discovered where M. Glencairn was incarcerated, and obtained permission for him to return to the inn for that night. He was to call in the morning and claim his passport, and the book which had been perhaps the chief cause of his imprisonment. Armed with this permission, Marie went straight to the Polizei-arrest, and found no difficulty in getting admission to the cell. The turnkey having brought a light, opened the door, and Marie's landlord, with an

officious exultation, sprang inside and caught Glencairn by the hand.

"Sir Gentleman, good morning. Free—free—understand? You were be in sorrow, Sir ——"

"So you have found me out, my girl?" said the old man, as he met Marie's bright and happy eyes.

"The soldiers thought you were a spy," she said, as she put her hand in his and led him out of the cell; "so we must keep near each other for the future. And to-morrow evening I hope we shall be going straight down to the army to learn where poor Charlie is."

But the landlord was not going to cheat the future because of the present. He invited himself to supper with Marie and Mr. Glencairn; and having generously insisted on their drinking some of his best champagne at his expense (it was about as

sweet and strong as Chartreuse), he rose, and proposed Sir Gentleman's health, and concluded his oration by saying, with a proud smile, "Long life Weectoria!"

CHAPTER IX.

A FRIENDLY COMPANY.

AS yet Marie had preserved a bright and cheerful audacity of spirits which had even gladdened the sad eyes of her companion. She would only think of Charlie as alive, and almost well, and ready to go home with them so soon as they found him out.

But the first glimpse she got of the wounded soldiers, who were now being sent up from the battle-fields, produced a terrible emotion upon her—an emotion that frightened the old man who stood by her side. They had gone round to Görlitz

by rail, and had there hired a vehicle to take them down to Reichenberg (further the man would not go, being afraid of having his horses and carriage "requirirt" by the troops). At the last moment the military governor of the town informed her that he could let them have an immediate passage to Reichenberg by a train which was taking down provisions. She accepted the offer; paid the coachman his full charge; transferred their small baggage to the station; and, with her companion, took places in the bare and musty third-class carriages of the train.

They stopped at Löbau; and as the passengers were informed that it was quite uncertain when the train would start again, they got out and walked up the platform.

It was crowded with the most pitiable-looking wretches on whom human eyes ever fell — men with gashed arms, and

legs, and faces, half bandaged, in ragged uniforms, with the wanness of sickness or death on their faces. The station-house had been converted into a temporary hospital, and there were doctors and nurses very busy inside, re-dressing the roughly-bandaged wounds of those men who were hourly coming up in batches by the train. That done, they were sent on again—Prussians, Austrians, Saxons, Italians, all huddled together—in the cattle-trucks, which were to take them to Görlitz, or some of the more northerly hospitals.

"Would you help me to rise?" said one poor fellow, who had been taken out of the waggon, and laid down on some straw.

The request was addressed to Mr. Glencairn; but Marie, with a quick "Let *me*!" ran forward and gave the sick man her hand.

"I thank you," he said; but there was no smile on his face.

"You are an Austrian?" she asked, looking at his grey top-coat, which was rent almost into rags.

"No, Fräulein," said he; "I am from Posen. I was cold last night, and the Austrian next me was dead, so the doctor gave me his coat."

"Can I do nothing for you?" she asked; and the old man saw her lips begin to tremble.

"No, Fräulein; unless the gentleman can give me a cigar."

"He has none. But he will support you for a moment, while I run for some."

"You are very good, Fräulein."

She went into the largest room in the station, and met two gentlemen with the white band of the sick nurses on their arm, who were carrying an almost helpless

man to a straw mattress which lay on the floor.

"I beg of you, gentlemen, to tell me where I can buy some cigars."

"We have none to sell," said one of them. "If you want them for the soldiers, you will find a box in the corner under the window."

She took a handful of them with her, and went to the man.

"There," she said, offering him the whole.

He took one only.

"My comrades have none," said he, simply; and then he crept away to a seat.

She looked at him for a moment, then round the station at the unfortunate and patient wretches who were standing or lying about, and then — she burst into tears.

"These are the men my father knew," she said to Glencairn. "What do you think of them?"

She went up to them, boldly and frankly, as if they were her own brothers, and asked them if she could not bring them anything, and then went into the station-house and laid violent hands on what bread and beer she could find.

"God bless you, miss!" said one of the women, coming forward. "We are so busy here."

She dispensed these frugal mercies with a free hand, especially to those who were incapacitated from moving. And she asked them where they had been wounded; and got wild, incoherent descriptions of battles, not one of which tallied with the other. These poor men knew nothing of the battle in which they had been engaged but the vague, half-maddened glimmer of

it which crossed their eyes: the only particular in which they all agreed was that no one of them had been near Trautenau.

"The wounded of Trautenau," thought Marie, "must be further down the country."

"And you," she asked of a handsome, dark-haired boy, who lay listlessly looking at the people before him, "where were you wounded?"

"Non vi posso capire, Signorina."

"What! you are an Italian? And have you no comrades here?"

The boy's dark eyes sparkled when he heard his native tongue.

"Ah, you speak Italian?" he said. "Will you tell the doctor how anxious I am to go with my comrades who have gone into Prussia as prisoners? Assure the doctor my wound is nothing; and I beg to be sent with my comrades. If the

doctor says I may go, the Herr Commandant will send me with the next band of my countrymen who come up the line, and then I shall rejoin my comrades."

"To be sure I will," she said.

She turned, and found herself confronted by the Commandant himself, and her cheek suddenly paled. He was about as tall a man as her father, and he was dressed in the major's uniform she so well knew. A less apparent resemblance would have startled any one. She quickly recollected herself, however, and went up to him.

"Herr Major, there is a poor Italian lad here, who cannot speak German; he says his wound is well, and wishes to rejoin his comrades who are prisoners."

"He will soon have plenty of companions, Fräulein. The Austrians have

sent these poor Italians to fight us, and their Germans to fight the Italians. You do not know him?"

"No; I spoke to him—that is all. I am a Prussian, and the daughter of a Prussian officer, Herr Major."

He glanced at her black dress; and said, very gently,

"Your father—was he at Turnan, or Gitschin?"

"My father," said the girl, "was no longer in the army. He had been a major in the Landwehr; and he would have volunteered — he was about to come here, when he died."

"What a shame was that!" said the officer, earnestly, as if in reproach of Providence. "If he was going to die, he should have been allowed to die with his comrades. Fräulein, depend upon it I will take care of your Italian."

"And if I give you this money, will you send for food and wine for these poor men?"

"Five double Friedrichs!" he exclaimed. "Ah, you are a soldier's daughter, I see. But you are too good. It is not here we want food and wine. It is down in the wake of the army, where the Krankenträger and the doctors have to go on and leave the wounded in the huts of the peasantry. You are journeying by this train, I suppose? Take your money with you, Fräulein; you will find plenty of use for it there."

Shortly afterwards the train started again; and thenceforward Glencairn observed a great alteration in his companion's manner. The bright and happy dexterity that had characterized her was now changed to a firm and marked resolution;—she was sadder, more thoughtful,

and more apprehensive in talking about Charlie.

"It is a pretty thing," she said to him, "to think of succouring wounded soldiers when you are in England. But it is different when you are among them, and see misery everywhere, and find yourself helpless."

"With your courage and resources, Marie," said the old man, "you should not call yourself helpless."

At Reichenberg there was a young under-lieutenant of the line in charge of the station, which also was turned into a lazaret. He seemed very proud of his bright sword, and his boyish moustache; and when Marie and her companion alighted, seeing them rather puzzled how to get out of the place, which was blocked up by soldiers sick and soldiers well, he came forward, with a smile in his big,

almost girlish grey eyes, and offered to conduct them through the central room, by a narrow path between the boots of two rows of soldiers who were lying on loose straw. Nay, as all the horses and vehicles in the place had been "requirirt," he even offered to send their luggage into the town by the hands of two stalwart privates. But Marie and her companion were desirous of pushing on by another provision train, which was going to Turnau in about an hour and a half, so they left their luggage at the station, and went down through the quaint, old Bohemian town, set in its amphitheatre of hills, until they reached the temporary residence of the Prussian Etappen-Commandant; * obtained from him the necessary permission

* Captain Lichtenstein was, I think, the name of a gentleman whose bearing towards strangers, at a very trying time, was marked by the extremest courtesy.

to continue their journey; went and dined at a small inn; then returned to the station, and found the commissariat-waggons about to start.

It was dark when they reached Turnau; and in the fields round about the station camp-fires were lit, and soldiers lay stretched on the ground, or sat huddled together in groups, talking, singing, and laughing. A ceaseless roar of ammunition waggons came through the darkness, accompanied by the cracking of the drivers' whips, and the shouts of the inferior officers in charge of the transports; and along the road which passed the station, and led down to the town, the dusky shapes of the waggons, the drivers, and the horsemen were alike dimly visible. Forth into this Pandemonium of sights and sounds Glencairn and Marie ventured, the old man carrying his own portmanteau and

helping Marie to carry hers. No sooner were they out into the road than every moment seemed to threaten their being ridden down by the galloping horsemen, or jammed between the wheels of the passing waggons. After a little while the old man's arms began to ache; and yet he dared not lay down his load, nor leave the rank of the cavalcade, under fear of being immediately trampled on.

"Surely the town cannot be far off," said Marie, bravely, though her arm was getting gradually weaker.

"Hillo! who are you?" said a voice, as a man lifted the arched tarpaulin of the waggon which they were following, and looked down on them.

"We are going to Turnau," said Marie.

"You can't carry those things to Turnau, my lass," he said; "give them to me. And see you and the gentleman

take the heads of the horses behind you, and keep them back, or you'll get hurt. You want lodgings? Why, there's no lodgings in Turnau—no beer, no meat, no bread, no cigars—nothing, unless you twist it out of those beggarly Bohemians with a good Prussian bayonet. Oh, I'll get you lodgings, and a supper—by God! I am a Führmann; I can 'require' horses and waggons when I like. See if I don't get you something to eat in spite of what they say! But stop—are you a Prussian, my girl?"

"Yes."

"You're not an Austrian? You don't snivel about saints, and tell lies all the same? You don't pray all night to the Virgin Mary, and cheat your neighbours all next day? You don't cry, 'Long live the Kaiser!' to his face, and curse him behind his back; and you're not one of

the Bohemians who have employed their priests and sick-nurses to ill-treat, and poison, and kill our poor wounded soldiers?"

"No, indeed," said Marie.

"That is good for you. Oh, you will see me draw a supper from those accursed Bohemians! Mind, you must pay. We Prussians have no need to steal. But you will see me frighten the thieves! You don't know, Fräulein, how they have treated us—how they have given us bad cigars, and bad beer, and bad loaves, all for good Prussian money, or a Prussian ticket, which is the same thing. I tell you, Fräulein, it is a pity the Bohemians don't fight; or, Heaven's sacraments! we should cut them to pieces and bury them, saints and priests and all!"

In the darkness the two travellers were conscious of being led down into a valley,

and across a river; then they found themselves confronted by the straggling lights of a small village, which seemed built on the side of a steep incline from the exclamations of the drivers as they strove to urge their horses up the hill. The Führmann jumped down from the waggon, took the portmanteaus one in each hand, and bade his companions follow him into the chief inn of the place. He was met by the landlord, who, seeing the man's uniform, urged a piteous entreaty against his entering.

"We have not a room in the place."

"You must make one."

"But the house is full."

"To the devil! Take hold of this baggage, I say!"

He himself took our two friends and pushed them into the chief room. It was a long, large apartment, with bare floor,

bare tables, and here and there a single candle that scarcely lit up the features of the soldiers—most of them Austrians on parole—who were grouped around the bare boards. Marie looked timidly round—she was not accustomed to white uniforms.

"Take a seat, miss," said the Führmann, bringing a chair to one of the tables. "They won't meddle with you, these Austrians, though they are better at harming women than at fighting men. And here—you!—landlord! this gentleman will sleep *here*"—wherewith he planted one portmanteau on a vacant space of the bench which went round the wall; "and you must find a room for the young lady, and provide them with food, or, as sure as I am in this accursed country, I will 'require' every drop of beer you have left in the house to-morrow morning,

and give you a note for it. That's what I shall do, Mr. Landlord! Oh, by God, we have a way of keeping our word, we Prussians, and you know it."

"Lieber Freund!" cried the man, in despair. "Your soldiers have already taken everything—all my wine, my three oxen, my eight horses, my two carriages, all my provisions, and I have nothing—nothing but my cheapest beer, and what bread they will sell me for ready money at the bakery."

At this moment the young lieutenant they had seen at Reichenberg entered the room; the Führmann saluted, and was immediately silent.

"You are here!" he said, respectfully, to Marie. "I preceded you, though I came by road. And I hope they are attentive to you; but you really cannot expect much entertainment. I have been

round the whole village in search of some supper; but either the rascally Bohemians have got nothing, or they are afraid to say what they have got."

"We have just arrived," said Marie; "and, indeed, have been put in here against the will of the landlord by our friend——"

"Herr Lieutenant," said the Führmann, "will you order the landlord to prepare a room for the lady? He swears they are all full—and he is a Bohemian—he lies."

But the lieutenant had more faith in the landlord's word. He went forward to a table where there were some Austrian officers sitting, moody and sad, except one young cadet who treated his capture as a brilliant joke.

"Gentlemen," said the lieutenant, "if any one of you has a room in the inn, will you give it up to this lady?"

"I will," cried the cadet, "if I can secure a bit of this bench that I see will be well occupied to-night."

"Thank you."

"And, Herr Lieutenant, can you give me in return some cigars for my companions here?"

"Faith, I can. But they're of the kind the people sell at five a penny."

One Austrian officer, with a splendid gold and white uniform that had not been in the least soiled, gravely rose and gave his chair—the only comfortable one in the place—to Marie; Mr. Glencairn sat down by the vivacious cadet; and the lieutenant, having produced his cigars, called for some beer and bread for three persons. The bread was black and sandy, the beer was the abominable stuff the Bohemians drink when they cannot afford to drink the ordinary Pilsener or Melniker; but it was the

best supper that could be got. The tall Austrian had himself been munching a brown crust with much complacency.

"Is the gentleman German?" asked the cadet, in German.

Glencairn shook his head, while he cut down the damp loaf.

"An Italian? A Frenchman? An Englishman?"

"Yes."

"Vat! an Englishman? Oh, I speak English very well; but then I speak Italian, French, German better, to say nothing of my proper Czeckish. But, you know, one forgets one's proper patois when one lives in Vienna. Est ce que vous n'avez—ah! pardon!—you have not been to Vienna? You acquaint not the concerts in the Prater? Mon Dieu! I was born myself in Prague,—my mother is a Baroness, monsieur, and you would see our maison

on the Hradschin, almost so high as the castle, and looking down on the town and the river and our splendid bridge. But I forget Prague in Vienna. Ah, you should see the young ladies in Vienna! Your ladies in English have no beauty, and no dress—your charming companion of voyage is German, nicht wahr?—the ladies in the France can dress, but they have no beauty;—the ladies in Vienna, they can dress, and they are angels. And I go into this sombre Prussia! I will be prisoner till the war is finished."

Marie was all this time receiving such replies to her inquiries as convinced her that Charlie, if he was severely wounded, must still be further down the country.

"Where were you wounded?" asked the old man of his buoyant companion.

"Wounded? I was not wounded. But I go to tell you—no, that is not English—

I will tell you how they took me. You know we had a battle near Gitschin, and I was in a wood at the back of Libun—you will see it as you go down the route. The Prussians came through the opposite wood, both sides firing hard, and they marched across the valley in the face of our fire. Brave enough—yes. Mais, monsieur, they are bigot—they are fanatic, that is why. And their needle-gun, too, it was dreadful. We were drove up through the trees, up the hill, up the hill; and then, when we got over the top, and saw still more Prussians, and our artillery gave no more on them, then, sir, our men got into great terror. They ran—curse them! One rascal in running down the hill drove against me, and threw me over a bush;—I fell on the other side, and in a minute down came the Prussians. I remain *perdu*, like a hare. I had the intention of to escape

back to my comrades when it was all over, and I lay between the two bushes in the long grass."

Some wounded Italians were here brought into the room, and clubbed among themselves to get a little beer. In the meantime a lot of Prussian soldiers insisted on their drinking out of their glasses; and there were reckless efforts made to understand each other, and profuse shaking of hands, and a great deal of untying bandages and showing great gashes about the ankle or elbow as a sort of proud and personal trophy.

"The Italians are our good friends," cried the Führmann, who was of the party. "They can't help fighting for the accursed Kaiser who stole their country. Buon giorno! La birra! Il pane! Was? Ich trinke auf eure Gesundheit!"

And, proud of his knowledge of Italian,

he clinked glasses all round, took a big pull, and then handed his own glass to the owner of a rudely-made crutch who was resting his doubled-up leg on an empty chair.

"Then," continued the cadet to Mr. Glencairn, displaying his large signet-ring in attempting to feel his moustache, "I lay and heard the firing go further and further off, but there were still men running about, and I lie for hours until it is quite dusk. Then, as I resolve of rising, who should come up but a priest and a body of peasants, who were out to find the wounded. They come upon me. I pretend to be not sensible. They take me up and put me on a sort of stretcher between two men—one of them mad, monsieur! Sometimes he screamed, sometimes he lie still; then he bites my arm through, and doubles himself up! Mon Dieu!—I felt his face

come against my hand after then, and it was cold, and I dared not move. Two, three times I was ready to jump out to get away from the dead man; but I knew I would be prisoner then certainement."

He again stroked his upper lip.

"A man sacrifices much for liberty. They took me into the church at Libun, where the doctors were; and I was laid down with a lot of bleeding and half-dead men on the ground. One man was dead beside me—I rolled him out of his cloak and his Prussian helmet—I put them on in the half-darkness—ach! how the blood of the helmet dripped down my neck!—and then I rose and walked out. I walked on—nobody stopped me. I walked on till I came to Gitschin—but instead of Austrians I found Prussians, and all the place in confusion, everybody being turned out to make way for the

wounded. It was quite dark, too. I thought I would go into a sombre little café and buy some bread before going on. I open the door—it is full of noisy Prussians, one half wounded, the other half clamouring for bread. All at once I meet a captain who has a pair of tongs in his hand and a piece of roasted meat hissing at the end. He was cook to himself. This devil sees my uniform under the cloak—he asks me what I do there—if I have given my parole—damn! I am a prisoner."

"But you could escape now," said Glencairn; "you are free."

"I have given my parole, monsieur," said the boy, proudly.

Meanwhile the roar of waggons without had never ceased; and ever and anon some horseman would alight and come, with his clanking sword, into the big

room to see if some food could be got anywhere. Long before this time, all the benches had been claimed for the night; and those who were not so fortunate as to have secured, like Mr. Glencairn, a bit of one of those benches, looked forward to a sound sleep on the bare floor.

"I can play a little," said the cadet, gaily, to his English friend, as he went to an old and large piano which was placed at the further end of the room. He shoved off some knapsacks which were weighing on the lid, sat down to the instrument, and striking heavily what seemed an improvised accompaniment, he rattled off the "Finch' han dal vino" song from "Don Giovanni."

"Will your young lady friend sing?" he asked of Glencairn, returning to the table.

The old man looked at Marie, in a hesitating way.

"Will you not sing us one of our old home-songs, Fräulein," asked the lieutenant, addressing Marie, "that we may think ourselves back in Prussia? Some of our men have collected in the passage —it is so long since they have heard any music;—sing them one of their own songs, and they will think of their sweethearts, or their wives, and their friends."

Marie rose, and went, with a smile on her face, to the piano. It was not a very grand instrument; but it was sufficient for the purpose. For as she began to sing that old Silesian ballad of the mill-wheel, which every one of them there knew by heart, there came a great cluster of blue and red uniforms around the door of the large room, and there was a mass of brown, bearded, manly faces listening

with an intense, breathless silence to the old, pathetic words—

"Sie hat mir Treu versprochen,
Gab mir ein' Ring dabei;
Sie hat die Treu gebrochen
Das Ringlein sprang entzwei."

When she had finished that verse, the same dead stillness reigned in the room and outside it; and a sort of glamour fell upon those rough-visaged weather-beaten men, and glazed their eyes with sad memories; and one or two of them, ashamed of a certain childish emotion, turned away and hid their faces. For you know what the old ballad goes on to say—

"Ich möcht als Reiter fliegen
Wohl in die blut'ge Schlacht
Um stille Feuer liegen
Im Feld bei dunkler Nacht."

And then the unhappy owner of that

broken ring, in those wild fits of remembrance, is like to be driven mad by the too suggestive music of the mill-wheel, and cries only for death and peace—

"Hör' ich das Mühlrad gehen,
Ich weisz nicht was ich will—
Ich möcht am liebsten sterben,
Da wär's auf einmal still!"

"I thank you for that song, Fräulein," said the lieutenant — in the saddened silence that followed; "God knows if I shall ever hear it again in my own country. And now will you play an accompaniment to me, if I sing a soldier's song?"

"I know the accompaniment to most soldiers' songs," said Marie.

"This one is 'Der Schweizer'—do you know it?"

It was the song her father used to sing;

it was that she had sung to him on a well-remembered evening at Wrexhill.

"Yes," she said, falteringly. She had not the courage to ask him to choose another.

So he sang it; and told how the poor soldier in the Strasburg trenches heard the Swiss alp-horn sounding; how it drew him away and compelled him to desert; how he was caught and condemned to die. And as he sang the song, the notes of the accompaniment gradually grew fainter and fainter—

> "Früh morgens um zehn Uhr,
> Stellt man mich vor das Regiment"——

The accompaniment had ceased altogether.

"The young lady is crying," said the cadet, in an undertone, to Glencairn.

And the lieutenant saw that too. But

like a man he sang his song out, and pretended not to observe the want of an accompaniment; and stood there so as to hide her face from the soldiers; and tenderly took no notice of her trouble.

Then, as he led her back to her seat, the girl seemed to think that some excuse was necessary; and she said to him, in a broken voice, "Herr Lieutenant, I am sorry I could not play you the accompaniment: it was my father's song."

CHAPTER X.

AT LAST.

NEXT morning the Führmann proved a valuable friend to the two travellers. It had rained all night, and the heavy wheels of the waggons, which had never ceased for a moment to roll onward, had churned up the roads until they were mere gullies filled with yellow mud. Now there was neither horse nor vehicle to be got in Turnau, any more than food or wine or lodging, and it was in this juncture that the Führmann, himself going to the army, secured for Marie and Mr. Glencairn seats in a waggon.

So they went down through the heart of this almost deserted country — the peasantry having fled through fear of the soldiers,—looking from under the tarpaulin on the low ranges of rainy hills, on the dripping fields, and on the long, straggling companies of drenched and tattered prisoners who wearily waded through the deep mud. On every side the country lay wet and silent around them; the broad highway which they followed was like a line of life through it — and such life! The hollow rumble of pontoon carriages, the lurching and splashing of field-cannon, the hoarse shouting of the waggon-drivers and of the dragoons who rode in charge of the ammunition—all this was sufficient to frighten away from their poor homesteads the tall, thin, muscular men and their fragile, handsome, dark-eyed wives, who inhabit that region.

The Führmann also assisted them in making enquiries about Charlie; and, in his rash way, caused Marie a bitter disappointment. They stopped for a few moments at the small village at Libun; and he, searching out the priest who was superintending the rude lazarets that had been formed out of the houses, asked for this Englishman.

"Fräulein!" he cried, rushing out, "you have found him. There is an Englishman here."

Trembling in every limb, Marie descended from the waggon.

"I cannot go to see him," she said to Mr. Glencairn. "Go in, and see."

He followed the Führmann and the priest into a low-roofed room where about a dozen men were lying on the floor. They walked softly, and the white-faced men looked after them, and said, "God bless

you!" to the priest, though I dare say they were all Protestants. They went into an inner room, and here were some more wounded.

"Any better yet?" asked the priest of a man whose face was hidden.

"No, Father."

The man turned, and stretched out his hand, and took the priest's hand, and kissed it.

"Didn't you tell me you were an Englishman?"

"No, Father. I said that I——"

A spasm of pain crossed his face, and he turned away his head.

"Not your friend?" asked the priest, who knew so much English.

"No," replied Glencairn, and he went back with the sad news to Marie.

When they entered the wretched, squalid, muddy little town of Gitschin, the

Führmann had to get certain orders from some one, and so had his waggons driven into the central square, in front of the low piazza which protects the miserable little shops. Here Marie was again advised to go straight on to Horzitz, and even further, as the most likely place to find Charlie. But they had to wait for the Führmann; and it was nearly dusk when they reached Horzitz, which is perhaps ten or twelve miles from Gitschin.

"You'll stop here, Fräulein," said the Führmann, "and you'll find your friend in one of the houses in this accursed village. But I tell you, you will get nothing to eat here, and nowhere to sleep; for every house has as many wounded allotted to it by the officers for the care of the wounded as it will hold."

He came forward, and offered his hand.

"I must go on all night to-night,"

he said. "You won't refuse to shake hands with me, although I am only a Führmann, for I am a Prussian, and you are a brave Prussian girl, or you would not have ventured here. But don't you be afraid. You can go where you like—no one will harm you while *we* are in possession of the country."

She shook hands with him warmly, and thanked him, and slipped a Friedrich into his palm. He opened his hand, looked at the smooth piece of gold, gave it her back again, and walked away without a single word.

She went after him, and caught him by the arm.

"Pray do not be offended," she said, anxiously. "I—I have been brought up in England—we are accustomed there to give little presents to those who do us services."

"You are not in England now, Fräulein," said the man, proudly, "and there is more need *there* for your money."

He pointed to the entrance of the biggest inn of the place, in which some maimed soldiers were pulling out their last groschen in order to purchase some cakes from a woman. Then he stretched out his hand once more, and said, frankly—

"I will not be angry with one like you. And I will tell you what to do with the money: Go to the landlady of that inn, and say, 'My good lady, I want wine and food for these soldiers. I shall not give you tickets payable a year hence, but very good Prussian gold. If you have such things hidden away, are they not in danger of being discovered? Give them to me, and I will pay for them!' And so good-bye; and good-bye to you, friend; and I hope you will both be successful."

All that evening Marie and her companion spent in trudging, through mud and rain, from house to house, in quest of their friend. There was no trace of him to be found. They were informed, also, that it was useless to apply to the medical officer who had written of Charlie's mishap—he must have gone on with the army, and as yet lists of the wounded had not been made out.

Marie and Glencairn returned to the inn, tired out and heavy-hearted. Their hopes of obtaining a clue to Charlie's whereabouts were almost gone; and the prospect of a vague search through the scattered hamlets of these Bohemian valleys was sufficiently cheerless.

A doctor, however, whom Marie consulted, stated as his belief that the town of Königgrätz had been taken after the recent battle, and that all the men who

had been wounded on the north and east of that place, and who had been lying in the various houses or huts, would be removed thither.

That night Marie slept in an arm-chair in the parlour of this inn, and Mr. Glencairn slept on the wooden floor. There were nine other persons sleeping in the same room, most of them lying on the floor, with their heads propped on bits of their baggage.

At daybreak, in the midst of heavy rain, and having left their luggage with the landlady, Glencairn and his companion started for Königgrätz, thinking it was then in Prussian hands.

And the rain did not cease to pour down on them, and on the rugged road, and on the dull, wet corn-fields. Marie never flinched for a moment; but her companion began to fear for her.

"Marie," said the old man, "this privation and exposure will kill you. Go back to Horzitz, and I will go on alone."

"What could you do alone any more than I? You could not ask of the people if he is there."

She always said "he" and "him;" she never called him "Charlie."

There was a faint glimmer of light along the horizon, that partially pierced the thick white mist which lay over the dreary landscape.

"Then I shall have two sick people to take back to England instead of one," said the old man, cheerfully.

"So you take back one, I do not care," she was about to say—but she did not say it, for she had a vague idea that it was untrue, that it was a mere passing complaint against the inevitable, a piteous remonstrance with the impersonal powers

of cold, and rain, and hunger, and therefore an unworthy weakness.

The next moment a long troop of Prussian mounted artillerymen came up at a brisk pace, splashing the mud on each side of them; and as they passed, she pointed with a smile to the string of brightly-polished brass cannon and black and yellow ammunition carts which they escorted.

"These are Austrian guns," she said, quite proudly.

"Glückliche Reise, Fräulein!" cried one, as he rode past, his brown face almost hid between the heavy helmet and the great, rough top-coat.

"God send you something to eat!" cried another, who was probably looking forward to Horzitz as a luxurious Canaan flowing with milk and honey.

Towards midday, however, the rain

ceased, and, by the time they had reached the small stone bridge over the Bistritz at Sadowa, the low mist-clouds had been carried away towards the north-east. Here, not far from the charred houses, a man and a boy were selling very palatable brown bread and a certain kind of brandy which was sold at a penny a glass. Marie purchased two loaves, sent the boy down to the river for some water, and while Mr. Glencairn and she were munching this dinner, the man gave them two baskets for seats. On rising, they found they had dined within a couple of yards of a long mound of clay, on which was a rude wooden cross bearing these words, written in pencil—18 *Prussians and* 23 *Austrians, are here buried. July* 4, 1866. Marie read the inscription, and turned away, without uttering a word.

When, however, they had crossed the

stream, and ascended the opposite heights, she suddenly stood still.

What meant those moving groups of men scattered over the broad undulating plain as far as the eye could see, away up there on the heights of Chlum, and down along the marshy hollows of Dohalička? They seemed to be clustered round particular spots, while smaller parties were dragging towards those spots limp, lank objects which trailed along the ground. A mournful neigh, more resembling a whine, startled her—she turned and saw, at the edge of the neighbouring birch-wood, a fine-looking horse that was standing among the low bushes, a great gash being visible on its shoulder. At the same moment her eye caught sight of another object which made her start back with a cry of terror. In front of the horse, and at the margin of the road, lay three dead men, saturated

with rain and blood. They had been dragged out of the wood to await burial. She caught the old man's arm with a nervous grasp, and hurried on; but instead of rushing from these horrors, she was rushing into them.

The trampled corn and potato fields—trampled smooth and even—were covered with hideous figures of riven horses and slain men. Great pools of blood stagnated in the ditches by the side of the meadows; and here and there the flattened corn was stained a dull red. The moving groups of men were for the most part swarthy Bohemian peasants, who were digging great holes in the soft brown earth; while their companions dragged the dead bodies, by the heels, or arms, or shoulders, to the sides of the pit, there to be flung in a heap, stripped, counted, and hid away out of sight in a hurry, as if their half-

blackened faces were uttering a dangerous protest to God against the crime of human wrath.

"This is the battle of which they spoke at Löbau," said Glencairn, in a low voice. "It is three days ago, and these men are not buried."

He shivered as he spoke; for, looking down into the ditch by his side, he saw one man lying whose face had been cut out of his head by the splinter of a grenade. He was an Austrian, and his white coat was black with his own blood. Beside him lay a horse, split in two by a cannon-shot; and further off, in a deeper ditch, about thirty dead horses had been dragged into a line to wait for a thin covering of earth.

"God have mercy on us all!" said the old man. "I thought a battle-field running with blood was only a figure of speech, and yet there is a stream of blood

running down that ditch. Surely it is the blood of horses!"

And the Vultures were there, too: men, and boys, and women, who, avoiding the patrols and the gravediggers, prowled up and down over the dripping fields, and searched the pockets of the unstripped corpses, and opened the cow-skin knapsacks, which were strewn in thousands, to see if the former owners had left any valuables in them. Others, belonging to the locality, filled their pockets with the metal plates which could be unscrewed from belts and helmets, and hurried back to their huts with the spoil, to issue on a fresh expedition. Coming to a hollow, in which was a pond fed by a small streamlet which trickles down from Chlum, Glencairn discovered a number of women down on their knees washing the blood from off the articles they and the men had picked up.

One or two boys, with red-stained fingers, had donned Prussian helmets, and were acting a mock battle with drawn bayonets. Further on, soldiers were gathering in the rifles, swords, and other weapons lying scattered about, and carting off tumbled ammunition. The gathering in of these helpless bodies, with the saturated hair, contorted fingers, and still, copper-hued features, progressed as steadily. All over those miles of plain and hill the dark figures were working away, busy as ants; for, though this harvest was spoiled, there were other years to come, and the people did not wish in the mean time to die of malaria.

At the summit of one of the heights, whither the road had led them, they came in sight of Königgrätz, half hid by the louring dulness of the day, and apparently surrounded by water.

"The battle-field seems to extend all the way we have to go," said Marie, who lately had not dared to look to the right nor to the left. "I think I can see these men at work away over there on the plain."

"My eyes are not so good as yours, my dear," said the old man. "But I can see the dark walls of a town. That must be the place. What a terrible road you have had to come!"

At this point, however, a sentry-box had been placed, and the soldier walking up and down in front stopped them.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To Königgrätz."

He looked at them suspiciously.

"Your pass: have you a pass from one of our officers?"

"Yes," said Marie; "from Major L——, the commandant in Turnau."

"Show it to me."

He took the paper, and read it.

"I can let you pass, if you like," said he, "but you will find it dangerous to try to get into the town. It is held by the Austrians."

"By the Austrians!" said Marie, faintly. "And where is our army?"

"Part of it lies by Königgrätz; the rest has gone on—whither does not concern you, if you are going to Königgrätz, Fräulein."

He spoke roughly, as if to show her she ought not to have asked for information from a sentry. But the next moment, seeing the sudden pain in her face, he inquired what had brought her there, and if he could assist her in any way. When she had told him, he said,

"In Trautenau? God knows where he may be now. An Englishman was picked

up alive, in the wood over there, some two hours ago, but that could not be he."

"Where is he?" asked Marie, with little hope.

"Oh, they are sent on in these waggons you see coming up, when a sufficient number has been gathered. The poor devils have been lying out these three days and nights in the rain. Did you not meet some of the waggons?"

"Yes; but I did not see my friend amongst the poor men."

"No; for you say he was wounded at Trautenau. This Englishman must have been sent on to Horzitz; or he may be in the waggon down there, where you see them carrying that man."

The waggon was stationed at the side of the road, some quarter of a mile further on. Marie briefly recapitulated to her companion what the sentry had told her.

"Let us go," said he, "it is our last chance."

"It is no chance," said she. "What we have to do is to go back to Horzitz, and wait until we can get some vehicle going towards Trautenau — for — for—I don't think I can walk much more."

"You have done so well, my dear," said the old man, in his kindly way, "that I believe you capable of anything; and we shall get to Trautenau by some means or other."

They walked on towards the waggon, which was one of those cumbrous things for carting hay, which the Bohemian peasantry use. It was padded with sacks of straw, and propped up against these were placed seven or eight men. The soldier nearest the end of the cart had neither coat nor helmet on, but they had flung an Austrian top-coat round his shoulders.

His face, browned with the sun and wind, was now sodden with dirt and rain. But Marie, her face as white as death, went up to him and looked into his eyes.

"Comrade," he muttered to the man next him, in German, "take her away. I saw her three times last night, and I am afraid of her in the daytime."

His eyes, with a sort of dull terror in them, turned to her. She went forward, and put her hand on his arm, and said, "Charlie!" He tried to draw away his hand, as if in fear; but instead fell helplessly back on the straw, and he fainted.

"You! What are you doing here?" said a man, coming up and savagely catching her by the arm. "Are you one of the Austrian women who are trying to poison our poor men? God! I would have you shot where you stand if I thought that. And here is another of

these poor devils fainted, as if there was too much brandy to be got. My friend! Comrade! Here, open your mouth, and drink, or you will die."

The rough driver-doctor forced some brandy down the man's throat, which brought him to his senses again, and then he turned to the girl.

"Who are you?"

"I—I—am his friend."

"Is that true?" he said, appealing to the wounded man; for there were strange stories afloat at that time among the soldiers, and many a bitter oath sworn over the camp-fires to tear in pieces the murderesses who were supposed to be going about poisoning the wounded.

"No, no, no!" said the man, in his husky voice, "I tell you I saw her last night in the darkness—in the wood—in the cold."

She forced her way past the driver, and took the wounded man's hand.

"Don't you know me, Charlie?"

He looked at her for some time with a steady gaze, and then a mournful smile came to his lips.

"I know well enough that it was you, Marie, who were with me last night," he said, in English; "but you should have taken me out of the ditch sooner. And Mr. Glencairn has come all this way too. You'll find it very cold here; and the horses' feet come over you at times. * * * Oh," he added, with a shiver; "how hard the horses hit one when they go by!"

The old man came forward, with tears running down his worn, sad face.

"Charlie, my lad, are you much hurt?"

"I don't know. But if you would only keep me from the horses' feet," he moaned out, feebly.

He turned his face away as if he were going to sleep. There was another slight shiver went through his frame.

"Here," said Marie to the man, as she took off her shawl, which was again quite dry, "put that round him."

"No, Fräulein," said the man, very respectfully. "If you think your friend is not warm enough, I will soon get him a covering."

He ran up the bank and into the next field, and took another Austrian top-coat from the heap of clothes lying by the side of a big grave. This, with the assistance of two companions, he put round Charlie; and the waggon started.

"Is he much wounded?" she asked.

"I don't know, Fräulein. I suppose the lying out has done him more harm than his wound. But we shall see in Horzitz. And you, are you going to Horzitz?"

"I will go where he goes. But I have walked from Horzitz to-day."

"Lieber Himmel! Have you, then, any money?"

"Yes."

"Then, Fräulein, give a couple of florins to any one of the Bohemians coming up with their empty hay-carts, and you can ride all the way."

The arrangement was speedily made; for while all the waggons going down the road were full, there were plenty of empty ones returning. Mr. Glencairn and she got into the rude vehicle, and the man made for them the best seats possible out of the dry straw. And then Glencairn insisted on Marie taking off her soaking boots and stockings, and wrapping up her small white feet in a piece of warm horse-cloth the man lent them. In this wise, towards nightfall, they reached Horzitz.

As luck would have it, the presiding officer at the "*Billet-Amt für die Verwundete*," directed that, to receive those waifs and strays, the parlour of the inn in which Marie had stayed the previous night should be cleared out and formed into a sick-room. The landlady in vain implored and entreated them to spare the only remaining room she had in which to receive her guests. In a few seconds some vigorous Prussian soldiers had shoved tables and chairs together into the passage, and laid down soft couches on the floor, on which the men were speedily placed. Two doctors, and two female servants went in and shut the door.

Marie turned to the landlady.

"Did I buy all the wine you had in your house last night?" she asked, anxiously.

The woman looked at her apprehensively.

"The young lady is a good friend to me. You will not betray me, Fräulein? I have yet three dozen of my Chateau Margaux; but it is so dear——"

"How much?"

"Thirty-six florins the dozen, Fräulein; and as I am a living woman——"

"There is the money. Tell the doctors the wine is for the men who are in that room, so far as they need it, and for anybody else afterwards. And you will give us chairs in your kitchen to-night?"

"You are an angel, Fräulein. Yes."

CHAPTER XI.

EXPLANATIONS.

THE news of the rapid series of Prussian victories came in due course to England, and afforded much opportunity for fine writing, the chief form in which England suffers herself to betray an interest in European affairs.

Mr. Helstone, who had demonstrated to himself, on purely theoretical grounds, the success of Prussia, as he had assured himself of the final victory of the Northern States of America, lost all interest in the struggle so soon as he saw that events were slowly working out his calculations. But still there were the little triumphs of

the club-room and drawing-room to reap —easy triumphs over people whose sole knowledge of extra-English politics was derived from traditional reminiscences of 1813-15.

"What a lot of guardian angels there must have been hovering over the battle-field of Königgrätz," he said to Fanny, one evening. "And how they must have been puzzled to find out which was their own man in the thick of the fight. They must have charged in squadrons and companies as the men below did, and had a reflex fight in the air. I shouldn't wonder if heaps of them quarrelled."

They were seated in the balcony overlooking the garden, she sewing, he with a book in his hand.

"You will become insane if you sit and dream over those absurdities," she said.

"No," he replied, "I can make no pre-

tension to anything so aristocratic as incipient lunacy. My forefathers lived in the country, and were out of the fashion."

"At all events," said the girl, laying down her sewing, and looking at him, "your guardian-angel takes good care of you."

"Do you mean yourself, Fanchette?"

"Oh no, I mean that woman. I saw her again this forenoon, when I was out with mamma."

"And you did not speak of it before?" said Helstone, with a troubled look.

"Why should I?" said Fanny, carelessly. "I don't tremble when I see the not particularly beautiful person. Why should I care about meeting her? But I'll tell you what I mean to do: the very first time she happens to meet me when I am alone, I will go up to her and ask her what she wants. To offer her half a crown

must surely strip the romance and mystery from her?"

"Yes," said Helstone, with an uneasy laugh, for he had no wish to tell Fanny of the real bearing this woman's vengeance had had upon his life, "is it not rather absurd that one who has written as I have written about sensationalism—I only mean fictional sensationalism, my darling—should find himself entangled in a web of the same ridiculous stuff? The complication is highly ingenious; but not very amusing to the principal actor. Fancy a rationalist caught in the arms of a devil's fish at the very moment when he is sneering at nautical superstitions! That is my case. But, after all——"

"After all, my dear," said Fanny, with a quiet self-complacency, "you will find my remedy the best one. I shall cross the gipsy's hand with silver——"

"And she will scratch your eyes out. The action is less picturesque than shoving you down a well, or pitching you into a quarry; but these modes of procedure are purely metaphorical."

In spite of this banter, Fanny saw that her companion was annoyed and disturbed by the subject, and she therefore said no more about it. Not the less did she resolve to keep her promise of "having it out" with this woman when she could get the proper opportunity.

And that came sooner than she expected. Two days afterwards she was going up this same Larkhall Lane, and she was alone. As she drew near the railway-bridge she saw before her the woman of whom they had been speaking, who was then looking down on the lines of rail that led away westward beyond the pale golden mist of the city. Fanny forgot all about her

promise. The mere appearance of the woman, once considered so terrible, had in it still something of awe. She looked round—there was no way of escape. She was making up her mind to go right back again when the woman, having caught sight of her, advanced to her.

With which, Fanny, mustering up her courage, also advanced. She made believe to glance carelessly down on the railway-line, and would have passed her whom she pretended not to see, when the latter quietly stepped into the middle of the path and stopped the way.

"I want to speak to you," she said.

Fanny looked up, with an affected surprise.

"I don't know you."

"You do know me. And I know you."

Fanny did not like to look into that dark, powerful face, and into those hand-

some, passionate, penetrating eyes; but all the same she made an effort to do so, and said, with a cold effrontery,

"As you please. It is quite the same to me. But I have no time to wait here."

"You must find time," said the woman, "it is you who have cheated me out of years of revenge—you with your babyish face and your pretty, cold eyes. And now I have something to tell you in return, to please you—something for you to think about."

"I won't hear you."

"You shall. Before I was six months married, this man Helstone ruined me. My husband was three years younger than I was—a mere lad—we had run away to get married, and then found that we were in no way suited to each other. Helstone came, was constantly about the house, and constantly working to gain me over by his

insidious suggestions. My husband was fonder of me than I thought—when he found it out, he shot himself. You don't seem surprised. I suppose he has been teaching you, too? I fell ill, was nearly dying, and he never came near me—never once. I wrote to him—he never answered my letters. I sent friends to him: then he didn't come. What would you have done? Died? I felt myself getting better: I had my death announced in the papers, and had an intimation sent to him."

There was a smile on the dark face—not a pleasant smile.

"I had plenty of money—I went abroad. I stayed in St. Malo for nearly two years; and then I returned. I went and had a dress made similar to that in which he had last seen me, when I was in mourning for my husband; and then I

watched him, and showed myself to him in the street. He fell back."

She laughed slightly.

"From that moment I knew the game was in my own hands. I followed him everywhere: and every time he saw me I knew he was nearer delirium. For he believes in nothing; and such a man, when he sees a ghost, must become insane. But my luckiest effort was that morning you and he came up to London Bridge station. I was about to go down into Kent. I followed you; heard him asking for tickets for Wrexhill; and I went down with you."

"Excuse me," said Fanny, coldly; "but I have so little interest in the matter that I need not detain you. I knew you were no ghost when I saw you at the foot of the garden."

"And I saw that you knew it," said the

woman, fiercely. "And my only satisfaction was that he had ruined you too."

"You are mistaken," said Fanny, quietly.

"Have I not watched you all along? Have I not seen you every time you met, watched the progress he was making, and witnessed his triumph?"

"Oh, no! you are quite mistaken."

The calm self-assurance of the young girl astounded the woman before her.

"What are you doing in his house?" she demanded, hotly. "Where has your father gone? Where has your sweetheart gone? What does your mother do constantly up there?"

"Will you forgive me if I keep my own concerns to myself?" said Fanny, with a little of that dangerous light in her eyes which she had inherited from her mother. "As I have not had a husband whom I

compelled to kill himself, I do not feel any necessity to trouble a stranger with a description of my private affairs."

"Would you have talked in that way before you saw this man?"

"Before I saw Mr. Helstone I had no need to defend myself against your obliging curiosity."

She made an effort to pass, but the woman placed herself in front of her.

"One minute. Will you dare to tell me that after living in that man's company for months you are an honest woman?"

"I believe I can still lay claim to that title," said Fanny, with a malicious smile, "to which you, according to your own confession, don't pretend."

"Is that the way an honest woman talks?"

"Yes. It is the way I talk," said the girl.

"You are Helstone's mistress!" said the woman, with a savage emphasis.

"I must contradict you. Indeed, if you wish to know, we are married."

"Why do you not stay altogether in his house?"

"That is my affair."

"Were you married in church, or by the registrar?" asked the woman, with a scornful laugh.

"You are really too inquisitive. Good morning," said Fanny, proudly, and passed on.

She had not gone ten yards when she stopped and turned round. Who would have thought in seeing that handsome little lady there on that fine July morning—in looking at her charming face, and her girlish curly hair, and her delicate, graceful figure—of the fierce well of passion that now came bubbling up

redly and hotly into her cheeks? She stood for a moment, then walked rapidly back and caught the arm of the woman, who had turned rather sadly away from that brief interview. Underneath Fanny's eyes there was a line of crimson, the blue in the eyes was more intense, and her teeth were clenched as she gripped her late opponent.

"Woman!" she said—and how like her mother she was as she said it! "You have insulted me! You, an abandoned creature, have dared to think of me as being like yourself! Let me tell you, you lie! But I degrade myself in even saying that to such a being as you are!"

She flung the arm from her and walked off with a fine tragedy air. The woman looked after her without the least resentment in her eyes, and said,

"At your time of life you have no cause

to be angry with anybody. And if you are married, so much the better for you."

When Fanny arrived at Mr. Helstone's house, whither she had been going, her cheeks were still tingling with the encounter; and of course she went into a rapid and dramatic recital of the insults she had received.

"My darling," said Helstone, coolly, "what is an insult but somebody telling you that his opinion of you isn't so high as your opinion of yourself? And what is the value of the opinion of a person who knows nothing about you, and is himself or herself despicable?"

"But she lies!" said Fanny, vehemently.

"She is a woman," replied Helstone.

"She told me the most abominable falsehoods."

"So much the worse for her when the

devil gets her. My dear, calm yourself. She will catch it for all her wickedness by-and-by."

"She said I was not married."

"That was her fun."

"She said I was not an honest woman."

"Only an expression. Why should that disturb you?"

She stopped for a moment, in petulant indignation; and then said, rapidly,

"*You*—you have no feelings whatever; you have refined away your feelings until you would have us all grow up, and eat, and drink, like sucking-calves."

"My darling, keep the hose of your indignation for the places that are on fire. I am cool."

"You always are," she retorted.

"Why not? Let us have as much coolness in *this* world as we can get—you understand?"

In spite of herself a smile came over her face; and she went and put her arm round his neck.

"Now, if I had married any man but you, I should have been furious the whole day, and have worrited him, too, to keep me company. If I had married a man like papa, yielding, and too good natured, and too full of sympathy, I should be what mamma is—ill-tempered, isolated, capricious. I know very well that I want to be mastered."

She put her hand softly through his hair.

"That is, if my master knows when to be gentle as well. A tyrant I should kill. But when is our marriage to be made public, my darling?"

"People are not prepared yet, Fanchette," he said, "for the marriage ceremony of the future. They would chase

me out of the kingdom, as the Bavarians did Wagner, for trying to teach them to anticipate the next century."

"Why don't we go out of the kingdom," she said, "instead of being cooped up here, where one has an idea that everybody else is glaring and watching?"

"I have been thinking of that. Suppose we go over to France for a few months, and return as man and wife in popular estimation? As it is, I must leave London for a month or so now, when everybody else is leaving it, or my respectability would be gone; and I think the best thing we can do is to take a few weeks in Paris, and then a little trip somewhere for another month or two."

"With my mother?"

"Of course."

"And my father—what will become of him if he should return?"

"My darling, I cannot be responsible for everybody. Your father may remain in Bohemia for six months—who knows? Let us leave the house open for him, with a servant in it."

"But how will he support himself when he comes back?"

"As he did before he went away."

"You know he did not. You paid the rent; you gave mamma money for her household expenses——"

"And if your father is absolutely unable to continue his existence by his own exertions—what does that prove?"

"That I ought to help him. Oh, no, darling; I will accept your teaching wherever it goes, whatever it leads to, only it must not compromise *him*."

"*Adorable fille!* you are inspired. Human nature is the mother of inconsistencies, otherwise she would die, as women

do die, for want of children to suckle. Your father shall live: we grant him length of days."

"Thank you, my lord. Will it please your lordship to have the whole put into a pantomime?"

"For the benefit of young ladies whose personal will annuls their philosophical education? Fanny, go and get a guide-book to Paris, and sit down and read it, and be a good girl. I know Paris so well that to take anybody through it, and point out its features, would be like a lover examining his mistress's cheek with a microscope."

It must be clear to my feminine readers, if any, that the fact of Fanny having ignored entirely that ugly reminiscence called up by the woman she had met, showed that her philosophical education was, in one direction at least, very perfect. Per-

haps Mr. Helstone had taught her that when a person is satisfied with his or her present and possible future, there is great unwisdom in alloying that present and future by recalling the past. For a woman to have achieved her release from the trammels of what George Sand calls "recollective jealousy" is so great a miracle, however, that, without affirming that Fanny was so delivered, I merely mention the particular fact. Helstone heard no more of the dark shadow that had haunted him so long, and was, doubtless, glad enough to have done with that horrible punishment for an early sin. Fanny was either too prudent, or too callous, or too well satisfied with her present lot, to treasure the grievance. But above all she showed her wisdom in concealing the circumstance from her mother, in whose hands it might have become a terrible

implement of evil to be used against either of them in future times.

"We are going to Paris, mamma," said Fanny, gaily. "And you are going; and we may remain a long time there; for, you know, Mr. Helstone is quite independent of his profession now."

"And afterwards?"

"And afterwards, when we return, we shall be husband and wife in public; and we shall leave this house and go further west, you understand? And you shall come and stay with us."

The mamma smiled. To be husband and wife "in public" was all she required; she did not much trouble herself about the *morale* of the "marriage of the future."

But what of Fanny's father? No one seemed to think of him.

CHAPTER XII.

CALAIS.

FOR three weeks Charlie lay in Horzitz, and during that time Marie and Mr. Glencairn tended him as best they were able, in midst of many severe privations. Fortunately, the delirium, superinduced by long exposure, left him without reaching any crisis, and there remained but the two wounds he had received respectively at Trautenau and Königgrätz. The first of these had proved so slight, despite the fears of Doctor Straumetz, that he was enabled to go on from Trautenau, overtake his company, and be present at the

crowning victory of the campaign. There a grenade splinter had not only cut into his side and knocked him senseless, but had caused him to tumble into a ditch at the edge of a poppy-field, where he lay until the morning of Marie's arrival, when he was picked up by a Krankenträger.

At the end of the three weeks, they took him down to Prague, and changed the floor of the Horzitz inn for a spacious apartment in the Schwarzen Ross—one of the hotels standing at the end of that long and handsome street which is the pride of all true Bohemians.

How peaceful and grateful was the rest he obtained here—how delicious the utter silence of the place, broken only by the plashing of a fountain in the square of the hotel, after the roar, and turmoil, and starvation of the village they had left! By-and-by he was able to walk about a

little in the picturesque, dirty, grand old city. In the forenoon he and Marie, and the old man, too, went along to the banks of the Moldau, crossed over into the Sophien or Schützen Island, and sat there under the magnificent lime-trees, with the broad river flowing round them, with pretty German maidens and their mothers sitting in the shade, and knitting, with here and there a group of Prussian soldiers come in the day-time to be disappointed by the absence of music and dancing. The warm sunlight and the sweet air stirred and freshened his blood; and the trees grew green again to his eyes, the houses were white and cheerful on the banks, and the splendid river was of a blue as deep and intense as the summer sky overhead.

Several times, too, they went to the theatre; and Charlie, though he sat well

back in the box, recognized not a few of his old companions in the pit or gallery. Marie was much amused; and Mr. Glencairn, knowing not a word of German, nevertheless fell deeply in love with Fraülein Rottmeyer. Of all the men who went nightly to see that young person, was there one who did not?

But on one afternoon they had ventured as far as the public recreation-grounds on the other side of the Hradschin, and, having walked through those splendid avenues of limes, climbed up to the Belvedere gardens on their way home.

On the lofty plateau which stretches along the brow of the hill, as some of my readers may be aware, there is planted a little grove of acacias and limes, with tables placed about under the soft, green branches. Our party sat down at one of these tables, just on the brink of

the height; and there, from underneath the boughs of the acacia, they looked down on the glowing sunset which lay over Prague. Round the noble city, the Moldau circled in a broad line of crimson fire; the white houses fronting the river were now a dusky red; and a pale purple mist floated over the tall minarets of the town, and deepened downwards over the distant country on towards the horizon.

And then, as darkness fell, the hum of voices ceased. The moon rose and glimmered along the river, and the cold, clear light touched the statues on the great bridge, pencilled out the tall spires that rose from the dark breadth of the city, and palely kindled the magnificent heights of the Hradschin, with the grand castle above. The intense silence was only broken by the striking of an hour from one of those hundred churches which were

clearly visible in the dusky transparency of the night. One by one minute orange lights began to twinkle through the darkness below, until all the town was mapped out by lines of golden star-fire, while the domes of the temples, and the roofs of the houses, and the islands on the river, and the mighty rock, with its castle, were bathed in the mild blue radiance that fell from above. You shall wander over Europe without finding such a scene as that out of Prague, my empress of cities!

Glencairn was walking about, communing with himself, or looking down on the extraordinary panorama which was displayed before him. Marie and Charlie sat alone, at the small table, apparently struck into silence by the stillness and exceeding beauty of this immense, living, and breathing picture around them. Only

one speech was possible in that tender silence—the speech of love.

"I did not believe there was anything so fine as this in the world," said Charlie, in a low voice; "and it is owing to you that I am alive to see it."

"It is time we should go," said Marie, coldly. "The night is warm, but the night air——"

"One moment," said the young man, anxiously, but still in an undertone, "Marie, will you be my wife?"

She glanced at him suddenly, quickly, with troubled eyes. There was a singular expression on her face; and in the shadow —for the moon fell upon her back—he fancied he could detect a sort of smile upon her lips. She drew away the hand that he had attempted to take.

"Oh no," she said, calmly. "I—I expected you would ask me; but if you wish

to thank me for having come to see you, Charlie, don't take that way of expressing your—your gratitude, may I say?"

These words, as here put down, seem to hold a certain sarcasm in them; but there was nothing of that in the sad, frank earnestness with which she spoke. Her face, as I said, was in shadow, for the moon was high over the Laurenziberg, and her companion could not exactly say how her eyes might have qualified the message; but there was no mistaking the sincerity of her tones. His face, on the other hand, was full in the light; and she saw—was it with some surprise and not without some hidden joy?—the look of pain and disappointment her refusal had painted there.

"You are mistaken, Marie," he said. "It is not gratitude puts me at your feet—it is worship. I see in you what I had

never before dreamed of as belonging to woman—stay! let me say this now, whatever may be your final decision—one word, Marie, to tell you how you have endeared yourself to me—how I regard you as the noblest of God's creatures whom I have met in this world. And you will ask me how I dare to ask you to marry me. Very well. No one can answer that. It is the privilege of such a love as mine to make one reckless of calculations, blind, selfish—to have but one aim and one idea—you understand, Marie?—you——"

"It is of love you speak: it is gratitude that makes you speak," she said, simply; and then she rose.

"Marie—must I take that as your last word?"

Her eyes dwelt upon his face for a moment, as if they would fain have said what

her lips dared not say. It was a strange, uncertain, wistful look.

"Marie, it is not your last word?"

"It is, Charlie."

He rose and followed her; and Mr. Glencairn, seeing them moving, came away from the edge of the precipice on which the gardens are placed, and overtook them.

"I do not hope to see anything like that again in the world," he said, looking back on the wondrous view of the river, the bridge, the city with its threads of golden fire, and the soft moonlight lying over all. "But I shall remember this evening as one of the pleasantest of my life."

"And I," thought Charlie, "as one of the saddest."

They went down to the foot of the hill, crossed the Moldau by means of the ferry,

and made for their hotel by a short cut leading them through the central square of the city. Here, in front of the old Rathhaus, a great crowd had assembled round the statue of the Virgin Mary, which stands in the middle of the open space. Small chambers in the pedestal, filled with flowers and images, were lit up by candles —and in the dull orange light streaming from these little grottoes a man was reading from a book certain hymns which the people sang in a long, mournful strain. The women were for the most part kneeling; the men standing, with heads uncovered; the strong moonlight hiting sharply here and there on a young girl's cheek or on a man's bearded face. As Glencairn and his companions came up, the music rose from a hoarse monotone into a strange pathetic wail, and the old man, arrested by the impres-

siveness of the scene, stood still for some seconds, and involuntarily took off his hat.

"Those people are Catholics," he said, as he turned away, "and we are Protestants; but God will smile at our poor little differences when he calls His great family around him."

Marie and Charlie spoke scarcely a word during this homeward walk; though the young man was constantly dropping a little behind so as to catch a glimpse of his companion's face without himself being observed. Suddenly he said,

"I am sure I am well enough now to travel; and, as the permission has come, I should like to make an effort to reach England."

He spoke abruptly and distantly—Marie alone knew why.

"You must not hurry," she said "but

when you feel yourself able to go, we are ready. Is it not so?"

She appealed to the old man on whose arm she leaned.

"Yes," said he, rather sadly. "We must stay here no longer than is necessary. You, Marie, have your affairs to look after; Charlie, too, has to begin a new life when he reaches England; and if I can only look forward to my return with sadness and regret, it is a weakness and ingratitude I cannot help."

"You say you will have no occupation, no friends. You must stay with me," said Charlie.

"You shall stay with me, and be my father," said Marie, looking up into his face.

He had told both of them the story of his complete estrangement from his family.

"No, no!" he said, hastily, and almost

with irritation, "I want no more kind ness. I shall be best alone. I am too dull company for anybody but myself —and—and all I want is to be alone. I want no more kindness."

"But you will not refuse me?" she said.

"I tell you, my girl, I don't want to be a burden upon any one!" he replied, in a fretful way. "I have been all wrong during my life; I don't want to avoid the punishment. I shall be better alone: what right have I to annoy either of you two? Don't speak of that any more. Let me go my own way."

Indeed he had of late become peevish and irritable to a degree very noticeable to one acquainted with his former calm serenity and gentleness of disposition. He liked more than ever to be alone; and he sat brooding and silent. Some-

times he would make an immense effort to regain his former cheerfulness, but he speedily relapsed into this fretful melancholy which was only the result of years of disappointment and consequent mental unrest.

When they returned to the hotel, however, Charlie soon found means to withdraw him from this morbid introspection by repeating to him that brief conversation which had taken place on the height above the river. Marie was gone; the young man was in his own room, and only too glad to pour out his sorrows into this friendly ear.

"And the misfortune of it all is," he said, bitterly, "that I know her too well to hope for any alteration in her decision. It has been her character ever since she and I were children together that she would speak straight out her innermost thought.

And if she has done so now, what can I hope for?"

"I should like well to see you two married," said the old man, thoughtfully. "But I see too clearly what has made her refuse you."

"And so do I," said Charlie, with a vexed impatience. "She fancies that because her father asked me to marry her, I am now fulfilling a sort of duty, or trying to repay her for her kindness towards me. Good Heavens! if she knew the utter selfishness of my wish to marry her, she might have reason to be offended on the opposite ground. And, you see, Mr. Glencairn, she is so clear and honest every way, that when she says 'No,' it is as if you saw all along your life and knew that the 'No' could never be altered."

"Yet girls as brave, and honest, and

frank as she is, have altered their 'No' many a time."

"Ah, you don't know her! If I could only tell her—if I could only make her believe how true, and unexpected, and unfostered, my love is for her, perhaps she might listen to me—if I could only tell her how it all came about without my will, and how it now usurps my will and my every passion and thought. You think I am raving; but you who know what she is, who know what she has done, who see her every day—can you wonder?"

"No, my lad, no," said Glencairn, gravely. "I only wonder that you, having known her long ago, could ever have thought of marrying any other woman."

"Ah!" said Charlie, with a hot blush on his cheek. "Don't talk of that. I neither knew what men were nor what

women should be and might be at that time."

The interview ended there; and Glencairn, in wishing Charlie good-night, bade him be of good heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOWN BY THE SEA.

IT was by very easy stages that they proceeded towards England, and yet Charlie, weak with loss of blood, was terribly shaken by the time they reached Calais. Here they resolved to give him a day or two's rest before crossing the Channel, the more especially that the weather at this time was rather stormy. They had apartments taken in a hotel fronting the square of that not very charming town; and Charlie, lying on a raised couch, could from his window look down on the passing groups of fisherwomen,

soldiers, and English ladies still pale from the effects of the voyage over.

The second afternoon of their stay there, Glencairn and Marie had gone out to walk down the pier, and Charlie looked from the window to see them cross the square.

He had just glanced into the street when, instead of those whom he expected to see, his eyes fell upon three figures which sent a strange, painful thrill through his frame. For a moment he asked himself if the puppets of his delirium were returning to his brain—he could not believe that these people whom he saw down there were the real human beings they seemed.

"It *is* she; and that is Helstone who is with her; and that is her mother, in the brilliant dress, who walks as if she were the wife of a millionnaire."

It was indeed Fanny who walked along by Mr. Helstone's side, occasionally speaking to him, and sometimes laughing merrily at what he said.

"I once loved that woman," said Charlie to himself, regarding her with a strange curiosity, as if he had never seen her before.

She stopped, and held out her tiny wrist so that Helstone might button her pale yellow glove. As she half turned to enable him to do so, it seemed to Charlie that the outline of her figure was somehow altered.

"I thought there was no woman like her!"

He saw her pass on, with the same languid interest. He followed all three with his eyes until they were almost opposite his hotel; and then Fanny happened to turn and look across the square.

Involuntarily he withdrew his head a few inches: he did not wish to be seen by her. But she did not look upward. He saw her stand for a moment as if struck by a sudden surprise; thereupon she said a few words to her companions; and then she hastily ran across the square towards the hotel. Of course, he could not see whither she had gone; he could only see Mrs. Glencairn and Mr. Helstone standing on the other side, looking over with much apparent anxiety.

Mr. Glencairn and Marie were at this moment standing at the door of the hotel, waiting for some postage-stamps which Marie had asked from the porter.

"Charlie is much stronger to-day," said Glencairn. "If the wind only keeps down during the night we might be able to cross to-morrow."

"I hope so," said Marie.

"And a few weeks of quiet in some small English watering-place will soon restore him. All that he wants is rest; and as he is a rich man now, my dear, has he not the right to buy it?"

"Of course," said Marie, rather absently.

At this moment, Fanny, her face a little flushed by the excitement of the encounter, crossed the square and came up to her father. In doing so, she had time to cast a proud, defiant look towards Marie, whom she easily recognized, though she had never seen aught but her picture before.

"You here, papa?" she said to the astonished old man. "And Charlie—did you find Charlie?"

"Yes," said her father, and the coldness of his manner somewhat chilled her hasty anxiety.

"And—and how is he?" she asked,

almost piteously. "Where is he? Why did you not bring him back?"

"He is back."

"Where is he, then!"

"In this hotel."

"And wounded? That is why he is not with you?"

"Yes."

"I *must* see him," she said, still more piteously; and she would have passed the two people who stood there, had not her father interposed.

"No," he said sternly. "It is not fit that *you* should see him."

She looked up into his face in a frightened way, like a child anxious to conceal its fault.

"Why, papa? Why should I not see him? He was my friend as well as yours."

He looked at the girl, and her eyes fell.

"Your friends are over *there;* it is not here you should come for friends."

"You mean that?" she said, looking up, half threateningly, into his face.

"Oh, very well," she continued, with a bold assumption of her mother's haughtiest manner, "I *have* my friends —friends who are able to keep me out of starvation. I have no particular wish to see Mr. Bennett, except to say that the great interest he took in my affairs need not have provoked him into becoming a common soldier. I have no doubt he has returned home with a fortune—equal to that he made by his painting."

"Have you anything more to say?" asked the old man, calmly.

"Nothing," said the young girl, with her eyes hot with rage, "except to tell you that as you yourself chose to sepa-

rate yourself from us, you need not blame us for what may happen. Mr. Helstone kept your house for you before you went away: you may keep it now yourself——"

"And it is my own daughter tells me that!" said the old man.

"We were considerate. We did not tell you before, because you might have gone off to the war, too, like Charlie, and had a young lady so far forget her reputation as to follow you about the country, because she could not get a husband at home.'

Marie stood frightened and silent, looking with a sort of awe upon the graceful and beautiful little creature before her, who had now the eyes of a tiger and the cheeks of an angry woman.

"And you!" said Fanny, as she walked off, turning to Marie, and regarding the

timid girl with a bold, ironical look; "you had to go a long way to find a husband. You found him at last. Were you successful in pressing your suit? Did you beg him to marry you, or did he refuse you?"

Glencairn would have spoken; but Marie put her hand on his arm, and restrained him.

"She is your daughter; let her go."

"She is not my daughter," replied the old man, bitterly; "I have never had a daughter. When she was but a child I thought she belonged to me, for she could not speak out the nature within her; when she was a girl she had the grace to be a hypocrite; now that she is a woman I know she is none of mine—none. It is surely impossible that I nursed this creature on my knee, and loved her as the only blessing I had on

earth. Or I was blind, and would not see her mother's nature in her. But I feel the weight of my punishment now."

They gave up their intention of walking down the pier; they returned into the hotel, and went up to the room in which Charlie lay. Without speaking to each other, both had resolved to say nothing of this meeting to him—moved by different motives. But no sooner had they entered than he turned from the window, and said, with a slight smile,

"What a chance you have missed, Mr. Glencairn! I have just lost sight of Mrs. Glencairn and your daughter—they have been down in the square for several minutes."

Marie, unobserved by either of her companions, had her eyes fixed upon him while he uttered these words, and she

seemed to be watching anxiously the expression of his face. What did she see there? Nothing but a half-indifferent curiosity, and the faint pleasure of telling news.

"I saw them," said Mr. Glencairn.

"You did? Then it was to speak to you that F—— that your daughter crossed over?"

"Yes. But," added the old man, hastily, "I have no wish to speak further about it—it is not a pleasant thing for a father to talk about, and you should not ask me. I—I tell you, if you were an old man, and had only one child, and you found that even she was to be taken from you—separated, not by death, which would be only a temporary misfortune, but altogether—and you could no more think of her when you were far away from her, and be glad to know that

you were going back to hear her voice—for that was how I use to think of my poor little girl——"

They heard but one bitter sob; the old man rose, looked out of the other window for a few moments, and then went away to his own room.

"What did she say to him, Marie?" asked Charlie.

"She insulted him cruelly," said the girl. "They will never meet again as father and daughter."

Next day was so calm and fine that the expected journey took place; and our friends soon found themselves in England, and in London. Mr. Glencairn persisted in his resolve to go to his own home. He went, but was so overwhelmed by the utter loneliness of the gaunt house that he fled back for refuge to Marie.

"I come to you as a beggar," he said;

"but I do not think I shall trouble you long."

"You come to me as a father," said the girl, with tears in her eyes; "and you make me your debtor."

They remained in London but a few days. Some business relative to Charlie's affairs having been settled, he yielded to Marie's solicitations, and, with Mr. Glencairn, went down to the house at Wrexhill which had been so long empty.

But the old man was not at peace. He wandered about in a restless way, was irritable at times, and at times a prey to long fits of nervous disorganization which betrayed themselves in his desire for seclusion, his crying when spoken to kindly, and by his dull, solitary musings along the seashore. Instinct, rather than intention, led him to gather a few plants and dry

them; but in one of those moods he destroyed the flowers, saying he was too old to begin a new herbarium. They saw from day to day how the loss of his herbarium preyed upon him, though he would allow no one to speak of it.

He fell ill. He became worse, and the doctors said he had caught fever. Fever it may have been; but, at all events, he sank gradually, and surely, and without a murmur. His peevish irritability was gone; his old kindliness and gentleness had returned.

One evening he said to Marie,

"Will you lift me up, my dear, that I may see the sea?"

"The doctor says you must not stir," she said gently.

"I shall soon be out of the doctor's hands, Marie. Help me to rise a little bit!"

She did so, and propped him up with pillows; and then he sat and looked out on the heavy purple waters that were covered by a dull golden mist, and a bright crimson sky.

"That's what we used to ca' the gloamin," he said, unconsciously breaking into his old habit of pronunciation, "in the auld days when she and me used to sit beneath the big saugh at the corner her o' father's house. Come here, Marie."

She went still nearer to him.

"I mun' tell ye this. Ye are no doin' right by Chairlie—ye dinna see what I see—that his heart's entirely yours."

"I—I have seen it lately," said the girl, in a low voice.

"And ye winna speak!"

"How can I speak?" He did not hear the question; he was again looking

out on the ruddy sky and the dark water.

"But the sea's braw, braw on a nicht like this! *I dinna mind learnin' much about the stars ee now, for I'll get a braw glint o' them as I gang by to my Faither's hoose.* Do ye ken wha said that?"

"Won't you lie down now?" she asked gently.

"Yes. But tell Chairlie to come to me, and bide ye ootside the door for a wee."

She obeyed his commands, and Charlie came softly to the bedside, and there leant down to hear the broken utterances of the old man.

"And noo that's settled, Chairlie, get me out my purse—there's naething in it but a bit o' wrinkled paper—it's a' my wealth in the warld——"

The young man got out this piece of paper, and placed it in the thin, feeble fingers which unrolled it so that those dull, glazed, sad eyes might once more read the words :—

"*Listera ovata :* Bird's-nest or Tway-blade. Gathered by H. M. for J. G. Gourock, 28th July, 18——"

They were, as I have said before, written in a girl's hand.

He looked at the writing with a faint smile on his face, then he carefully folded up the paper, took it in his right hand, and laid his hand on his breast.

"Tell Marie," he said, in a broken voice, "to—to—keep the ring I gied her. —Tell her no to pairt with that ring ; because—because I got it frae—frae *her*."

He lay back on the pillow. He was dead.

"Marie!" said Charlie, in a hurried voice, going to the door. She came in—he took her hand, and they together knelt down there by the bedside. There was no sound in the stillness of the chamber but that of the young girl's sobbing, and the plash of the water on the shore.

They found his hand tightly clasped round that bit of paper. You see, it was a token he would fain have taken with him, to tell her how he had been faithful to her, how he had never ceased to think of her, how he had always looked forward to meeting her. It was the talisman with which he was to go forth to seek her, and claim her as his own. Was it needed? If there be in the Divinity that fountain of justice from which we draw our feebler notions of right and wrong, of compensation and of reparation, we may

surely answer no; for at the moment when his dying hand closed upon that scrap of writing, she was waiting to receive him on the threshold of the kingdom of God.

THE END.

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